

Egypt to send trade team to Iraq

CAIRO (AP) — The Federation of Egyptian Industries will send a business delegation to Iraq in late February to lay the groundwork for a resumption of trade. Federation officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Sunday that 31 Egyptian businessmen would make the trip to discuss exporting food, pharmaceuticals and other products as well as reopening a trade centre in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. The trip comes as Iraqi officials are negotiating with the United Nations in New York for limited oil sales to finance the purchase of necessities. Iraq has been under sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Several Egyptian business delegations visited Baghdad last year but they reportedly were unable to conclude any deals because of questions about Iraq's ability to finance the purchases. The visit will be Feb. 28 to March 5, according to the federation, which represents thousands of Egyptian businessmen. The delegation will be headed by Moudouh Maki, president of a leather manufacturing company who serves as deputy chairman of the federation. He also is a member of parliament.

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Iraqi opposition group opens office in Amman

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An Iraqi opposition group Sunday announced that it is opening offices in Amman in a bid to end the plight of the Iraqi people who have been suffering under the five-year-old U.N.-imposed economic embargo.

The offices of the National Accord Movement, whose headquarters is in the north of Iraq and which has offices in London and Damascus will open its offices in Amman shortly after Al Fitr feast.

The leader of the movement, Iyyad Alawi, said at a press conference held at the InterContinental Hotel that the movement mainly aims at promoting democracy and pluralism in Iraq and alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people. Mr. Alawi said the movement coordinates with all other countries who seek to achieve the same objectives.

"We try to cooperate with all countries except Israel," he said.

The movement, established in 1991, groups a range of people including ex-army officers. Its leaders claimed that there were army defectors "in hundreds" and they are trying to join the movement. The leaders said they

were working on building a qualified and capable army from within the movement and on recruiting other members from within the Iraqi military. They said their office in Amman will be a regional one and they would focus on information and propaganda about Iraq, including plans to print an Amman edition of their newspaper, Baghdad.

Commenting on the announcement yesterday, the government reiterated its policy of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs but said that "it will not stand in the way of groups or organisations which work for humanitarian causes through peaceful and political means."

A government official told the Jordan Times that Jordan's main concern was to "alleviate the suffering of Iraqis under U.N. sanctions. Any group that has the same goals will not find itself in conflict with Jordan."

The movement's speaker Salah Sheikhal said the movement, which has its own broadcasting station in Iraq and a weekly newspaper, did not receive any financial backing from any party and is totally independent.

Asked on Jordan's stand towards Iraq, Mr. Alawi said that His Majesty King Hus-

sein had "very clearly outlined the Kingdom's keenness on preserving the unity of the Iraqi people and expressed his support for any decision taken by the Iraqi people," he added.

Mr. Alawi said the movement had earlier met with the King but did not specify when or the exact details of the meeting. He expressed hope that other meetings with the King and Jordanian officials would take place.

It is the first time that Jordan has publicly welcomed an Iraqi opposition group in the Kingdom. The move comes after Jordan has made major strides towards improving its relations with other Arab countries, the Gulf states in particular.

The King last week made two visits to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, aimed at coordinating efforts towards the situation in Iraq and other pending issues. The King's visit to Saudi Arabia, which was described as very successful, was the King's first official trip to the Saudi kingdom since the Gulf crisis in 1990. Relations were strained ever since between the two countries for what was perceived as the Kingdom's tilt in favour of Iraq during the war.

"Our main aim is to bring

(Continued on page 3)



SATELLITE TV DISH CARRIED BY DONKEY CART: A satellite antenna dish is loaded onto a donkeycart as it passes through the city of Multan in Pakistan's Punjab province Sunday. Satellite television is becoming increasingly popular in Pakistan as an alternative to state-run channels (Reuters photo)

PNA closes Istiqlal newspaper, arrests editor

Arafat to curb violence ahead of Israeli elections

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian officials said Sunday they were preparing a list of 92 more leaders who want to return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a meeting to discuss removing references to Israel's destruction from the PLO charter.

Israeli and Palestinian officials said Israel had already approved the return of 154 PLO members to attend the meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), a quasi-parliament empowered to change the PLO document.

"We received approval from Israel for 154 names, out of a list of 194 PNC members submitted," said Salim Zaun, acting PNC president.

"Israel has not rejected the 40 others, but is continuing to study the names on the list," he said.

"We are now preparing a new list with 92 names and we will give it to the Israelis as soon as possible," he added.

Israeli officials said they had not yet received requests for the return of two leading PLO opponents of peace with Israel — George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Nayef Hawatmeh of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

Asked if Israel would respond favourably to applications from the two, who are held responsible for numerous anti-Israeli attacks over the past 20 years, spokesman Shlomo Dror said, "We cannot approve something we did not receive."

In addition to the 154 already granted permission to return, Israel is likely to approve "within days" 19 names that were already submitted but lacked some minor accompanying details, Mr. Dror said. He declined to elaborate.

The PNC is expected to meet in May to discuss amending the PLO charter, a document first drafted in 1964 that calls for the elimination of the Jewish state.

As agreed in his peace accords with Israel, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has pledged this

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final status of the Palestinian territories unless the PLO charter is changed. The negotiations are due to begin in May.

The PFLP last week submitted a list of its PNC members reportedly seeking to return to the territories and which included Dr. Habash's name.

But PFLP officials later said this was a mistake and that Dr. Habash, who currently lives in Damascus, had not asked to return.

In Gaza, Palestinian security police closed the newspaper of the radical Islamic Jihad movement early Sunday and arrested its editor-in-chief, Alaa Safawi, newspaper officials said.

Police went to the offices of Al Istiqlal shortly after midnight, picked up Mr. Safawi and ordered the newspaper to stop publication, editor Adnan Abu Hasnah said.

Continued on page 3

Government to present policy statement to House on Feb. 28

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti is expected to submit his government's policy statement to the Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday, Feb. 28, for a vote of confidence. The House will start debating Mr. Kabariti's statement on March 2.

The prime minister is expected to leave for the U.S. with His Majesty King Hussein on March 7, sources said.

The policy statement, which is expected to include all the government's plans for change in all fields, will be drawn after intensive debate among ministers, parliamentarians and intellectuals, a senior official told the Jordan Times.

In the lener of designation, His Majesty King Hussein called on Mr. Kabariti to carry out a "white revolution" introducing sweeping changes in all fields including reforming bureaucracy and fighting corruption.

For the past two weeks and since the new government was formed on Feb. 4, Mr. Kabariti has been sounding representatives of different shades of political life, on the sort of changes he needs to introduce to enhance democracy and pluralism, government sources said.

The reshuffle of post at the Royal Court, the General Intelligence Department and Public Security Department were meant to fuse "new blood" into the system in

preparation for the changes Mr. Kabariti intends to introduce, the sources said.

One of the main tasks that Mr. Kabariti undertook upon forming the government was the introduction of a new election law that ensures equality and fairness. A draft election law introduced by the ongoing government of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker was highly criticised by the politicians.

Mr. Kabariti said upon taking over earlier this month that he would "put the ceiling of public freedom higher" but would also require "greater responsibility."

Last week, Minister of Information Marwan Muasher promised sweeping reforms in the media and that would lead to the abolition of his ministry.

The government also pledged not to file cases against journalists nor to pressure professional associations. The government said it was aiming at laying the proper foundations for civil society institutions.

House speaker Sa'ad Hayel Srour was quoted in the local press yesterday as saying he hoped the government would submit to Parliament a draft elections law as soon as possible to give the deputies ample time to discuss and endorse the law.

He said that the law was one of the most important legislations for Jordan and enough time should be given to debating it by the majority of deputies.

U.S., Britain caution nationals in Bahrain

MANAMA (R) — The U.S. and British embassies in Bahrain on Sunday issued fresh security alerts on the Gulf island's political unrest following bombings at two luxury hotels.

"We've slightly toughened our message," a U.S. embassy spokesman said. The British embassy also revised its warning.

The level of security incidents has increased, along with the number and scope of police operations, but there have been no reports of threats or attacks directed toward Americans," callers to a special U.S. embassy hotline were told.

It advised all Americans to avoid, if possible, areas that had been the scene of demonstrations or police operations, adding: "To the extent possible, avoid all villages."

The embassy said there was no general reason to cancel normal indoor social events.

But during Eid Al Fitr, the three-day Muslim holiday at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, due to start on Monday or Tuesday, any parties or celebrations by Americans should take

place in private homes. "Avoid celebrating in downtown Manama," it said.

The embassy recommended Americans continue to exercise caution while moving around the island and be alert to any disturbances.

"Stay away from burning tyres, as they may contain explosive objects," it added.

The British embassy said: "Incidents and disturbances continue, but there is no indication that they are on the increase. The security forces continue to have the situation under control."

It said the embassy was unaware of any threats to Westerners but it noted that hotels had been the targets of attacks.

Both embassies stressed there was no reason for people not to come to Bahrain.

The U.S. embassy said there were about 3,500 Americans in Bahrain, half of them with the U.S. Military.

Britain has about 7,000 nationals on the island.

Two home-made bombs exploded at two luxury hotels recently injuring at least three people and causing damage.

Shbeilat wins JEA presidency

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Incumbent President Leith Shbeilat, currently held for lese majeste charges, was elected for the fourth time for a two-year term as president of the Engineers Association (JEA) with 5,381 votes out of 6,592 who voted on Friday and Saturday.

Three other independent candidates were competing with Mr. Shbeilat for the presidency seat by second after him, Hassan Hawatmeh, could only gain 352 votes.

In addition to the 154 already granted permission

Mr. Shbeilat, 52, is an opponent of peace with Israel and the policies of the International Monetary Fund in developing countries.

According to his wife Rima, Mr. Shbeilat might, after his victory at the JEA elections run for the Parliament seat at Balqa governorate made vacant by the death of Deputy Ibrahim Shihdeh in December.

Mr. Shbeilat is charged with slandering Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. The charges carry

a maximum sentence of three years in prison.

According to the law, if the president's seat becomes vacant for any reason the association's council has the right to elect its vice president or any other member as president.

The results of the elections showed that Islamists won all nine seats of the council. Husni Abu Ghaida, former JEA president and president of the Arab Engineers Union, won the seat of vice president with 3,879 votes against his only rival Abdul

(Continued on page 7)



Leith Shbeilat

Turkish political crisis deepens as Yilmaz-Erbakan talks stalled

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's political crisis deepened Sunday as coalition talks between the conservative Motherland Party and Islamists were stalled due to a last minute dispute and prospects emerged for cooperation between Premier Tansu Ciller's party and the pro-Islamic Welfare group.

In an unexpected move, a senior aide to Motherland leader Mesut Yilmaz was insisting on the formation of a Motherland minority government first before agreeing to a coalition with Welfare.

"This is our pre-condition, the Motherland must set up a minority government with the support of Welfare from outside. In the meantime, coalition talks between Motherland and Welfare should continue for a coalition protocol," Motherland's deputy chief Ilker Tuncay told a news conference.

Minutes later, Welfare and Motherland officials jointly announced that coalition talks between Mr. Yilmaz and Mr. Erbakan, planned for 1100 GMT Sunday, were postponed until

Monday "for a better evaluation of the current situation."

Asked if this was an indication of something negative, Welfare's deputy chairman Sevtik Kazan said, "It seems so, otherwise the meeting would not have been postponed."

Again minutes later Welfare leader Necmettin Erbakan hinted at the possibility of setting up a coalition government with caretaker Prime Minister Ciller's center-right True Path. Mr. Erbakan, asked by a reporter in parliament to comment on rumours that True Path wants an alliance with his Welfare, said: "We were saying that all those parties would compete with each other for cooperation with us, this is normal."

Necati Celik, a senior Erbakan aide, also said, "We may be involved in cooperation talks with any party."

Sunday's developments put a damper on remarks Saturday by Mr. Erbakan and Mr. Yilmaz, who both reported a general accord toward a Motherland-Welfare coalition.

So far Ms. Ciller has ruled

out any coalition with Welfare, but some newspaper reports suggested Sunday that her aides were in contact with the Islamists for a brief allied government to lead Turkey to early general elections.

Political analysts said Welfare was disappointed by Mr. Yilmaz' last minute pre-condition and might prefer to cooperate with Ms. Ciller instead to force fresh general elections.

"There is no reason for Welfare, the biggest group in parliament, to support a minority Motherland government," one source said, adding, "plus, Welfare is likely to increase its popular support in a new election."

Mr. Yilmaz' move calling for a Motherland minority government was aimed at toppling the caretaker government of Ms. Ciller, his political arch-rival.

"Our primary aim is to immediately get rid of this government, which has been involved in corruption," Mr. Tuncay said.

"So, during our coalition talks with Welfare, which will take some time, the standing government must be a Motherland govern-

ment, not this one (led by Ms. Ciller)," he added.

The Yilmaz-Erbakan talks came after Motherland and True Path failed to reach an agreement on forming a centre-right coalition government.

Turkey's Dec. 24 general elections led to a splintered parliament which cannot produce a one-party government.

Mr. Erbakan, who was asked to form a new government first in January, was unable to find a coalition partner.

Ms. Ciller's attempts to forge an alliance between her True Path and the Motherland floundered over personal rivalry with Mr. Yilmaz, who refused to join any government with her at its head.

On Feb. 3, President Suleyman Demirel asked Mr. Yilmaz to form a new government.

The president is empowered to dissolve parliament and call early elections if no government is formed within 45 days after Feb. 6, the date the current assembly speakership was formed.

Keep Jerusalem out of elections, Labour tells Likud adversaries

THE LABOUR Party Secretary-General Nissim Zivili Saturday proposed that the Jerusalem issue be removed from the national election agenda, but the Likud Sunday kicked off its campaign with Jerusalem being given top billing.

"The entire nation is united on the Jerusalem issue, and there is no sense in raising it as a bone of contention when in fact it is not," Mr. Zivili said.

"Moreover, doing so may give the (Arabs) the impression that we really are divided on Jerusalem and there is something to talk about."

But Mr. Zivili's proposal was categorically rejected by the Likud as a sign that "Labour is indeed afraid of this issue, and that means that there is something happening behind the scenes despite all of Labour's denials," the party's spokeswoman said.

The Likud will begin running ads in the press and on billboards claiming that Labour will redivide Jerusalem.

The Likud's campaign will suggest that secret Oslo-style talks are already in progress in Europe about the future arrangements in Jerusalem. Since this follows Prime Minister Shimon Peres' denial, the Likud line in effect challenges Mr. Peres' credibility.

Last night Foreign Minister Ehud Barak attacked the Likud campaign on Jerusalem, especially a sticker which says, "Peres will divide Jerusalem."

"Peres is not dividing and will not divide Jerusalem," Mr. Barak said. "The Labour Party and the government led by Peres envision a greater, united Jerusalem, under its sovereignty as its capital forever."

The Jerusalem issue is seen in the Likud as Labour's soft spot, and the one with which the Likud stands the best chance of



RIGHT-WING ACTIVIST CAMPAIGNS IN UPCOMING ELECTION: A right-wing Israeli woman carries a poster of PLO leader Yasser Arafat hiding behind a Shimon Peres mask, with the Hebrew words "Tricking your eyes," as she hands out election propaganda to passing drivers Sunday. The main opposition Likud Party kicked off its election campaign on Sunday saying Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres would give away Arab East Jerusalem after the upcoming general election (Reuters photo)

making some electoral impact.

Tsomet leader Rafael Eitan has said that he fully supports the idea of making Jerusalem the central theme of the joint Likud-Tsomet campaign.

"Secret negotiations on the division of Jerusalem are already being carried out in Europe, and Zivili's demand to keep the Jerusalem issue out of the electoral campaigns shows lack of honesty and demonstrates deceit, just as the Labour Party decided that the consensus on the Golan Heights issue in the last elections meant the subject could be taken off the agenda, only to later agree to give the Golan Heights to Syria with nothing in return," he said.

Polls published over the weekend show Mr. Peres maintaining a steady lead, with very close to the 50 per cent majority needed for a first-round victory. His lead over Mr. Netanyahu remains at

about 15 per cent, though one poll, Gallop, brings the gap up to 18 per cent in Mr. Peres' favour.

While campaigning is already under way, there is still no date for early elections. Labour sources say their election team will meet their opposition counterparts this week and then set a date within a few days. The earliest this can occur is Sunday, but most Labour sources doubt it will happen this quickly.

The problem now is a clear linkage by Labour between the election date and legislative amendments on propaganda.

Labour wants election ads limited to the low-rated Channel 1, while the Likud refuses to be banned from the more popular Channel 2. Labour also wants to abolish the law that forbids featuring any candidate on the electronic media for the month preceding election day. But the opposition fears this would give a clear advantage to the gov-

ernment, saying the media is already left-leaning.

If the opposition accedes to Labour's demands, it is believed Labour will be more inclined to let the opposition pick the election date it prefers.

The date the opposition, especially the religious parties, would like is June 4. But Labour sources — possibly striking a bargaining position — agreed on Saturday the most likely date is May 28, which is said to be Mr. Peres' personal choice. Less likely is May 21, because it comes just before Shavuot, June 4, Labour sources say, is being given the lowest priority.

In any case, Labour strategists want to make sure that if a second round in the prime ministerial race is held, it should be scheduled before June 20, when schools break for summer vacation and many Israelis begin travelling abroad — *From the Jerusalem Post*

Algeria's 4-year-old night curfew lifted

PARIS (R) — Algeria said on Sunday it will lift a night curfew imposed four years ago to help its troops fight Muslim guerrillas, starting from the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan on Monday or Tuesday.

The interior ministry informs citizens that the curfew will be lifted starting from the first day of Eid Al Fitr (marking the end of Ramadan), the interior ministry announced in a statement carried by the Algerian state media.

The government had suspended for the first time the curfew during Ramadan. Sunday's announcement makes the lifting permanent.

The curfew was imposed on 10 main Algerian provinces, including Algiers

and surrounding towns, in 1992 with the aim to help security forces ward off Muslim guerrilla attacks and limit the rebels movements and contacts.

The curfew was observed between 11.30 p.m. (2230 GMT) until 5 a.m. (0400 GMT).

Security experts and analysts were divided in their assessment of the curfew's impact.

While many said the curfew did not help any more the security forces because militants adapted themselves to its conditions, others said authorities lifted the curfew to show confidence they have the upper hand in the struggle against militants.

Algiers's residents and diplomats said the violence

appeared to continue with the deadly routine in recent months except during last November when authorities deployed their utmost security forces to guard presidential polls against guerrilla attacks.

Up to 50,000 people have been killed in Algeria's violence since early 1992 when authorities cancelled a general elections which Islamists were poised to win.

President Liamine Zeroul, who won a crushing victory in the last November poll, vowed to restore peace to his violence-ridden country through dialogue with opposition while continuing iron-fist policy to squash radical Muslim militants.

3 killed in Mogadishu attack

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Three people were killed and four others wounded when gunmen attacked the residence of a member of north Mogadishu's Islamic law implementation council early Sunday, officials said.

A spokesman for the Sharia Islamic Council, which runs Koranic courts in north Mogadishu, said gunmen suspected to be supporters of south Mogadishu warlord Mohamed Farah Aidede raided the home of the council's deputy chairman Sheikh Hassan Ali Alasow in an attempt to kill him.

Sheikh Alasow was not hurt in the attack.

The Islamic courts have the backing of north Mogadishu strongman Ali Mahdi Mohamed and his Abgal clan, but his rival, Mohamed Farah Aidede, whose fiefdom is south Mogadishu, is opposed to the courts.

The attack was carried several hours after a former supporter of Ali Mahdi, who is alleged to have defected to join Mr. Aidede's "government," appeared in an Islamic court here Saturday charged with illegal possession of weapons and sponsoring "anti-Islamic activities."

Gen. Aidede formed a "government" in south Mogadishu in June after his supporters declared him "interim president." The government has been denounced by other Somali factions.

Somalia has been without a recognisable government since the overthrow of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in

Aloni says national religious camp bred Amir and Goldstein

"THE NATIONAL religious camp, Hanan Porat and his lot are the breeders of Yigal Amir, Baruch Goldstein and the Jewish underground," Meretz's Communication Minister Shulamit Aloni has said.

She was reacting to a Friday night TV interview in which Prime Minister Shimon Peres said he would aim to include the religious parties in the government he will form after the victory he expects in the coming elections.

Mr. Peres spoke Friday on Channel 3's Weekly Column interview programme, where he asserted that "breaking the historical alliance between Labour

and the religious parties was a mistake. It was because of this that we lost in 1977. There is a consistent attempt to cultivate the myth that I was responsible for that loss, but in effect Labour did not lose but could not form a coalition because the National Religious Party had veered right."

Mr. Peres then said he would "very much wish to include religious elements in my next coalition, even if this would mean problems which Meretz would then create."

This caused Ms. Aloni to speak of "Hanan Porat and his lot," as "being the extreme right. No coalition

in which they take part can possibly continue the peace process and this will give rise to a terrible infitida."

Mr. Porat retorted that "it is curious that those who yell loudest about political incitement are the very ones who are so eager to malign the entire national religious sector and taint it with the stigma of Yigal Amir. This kind of demagoguery does not even merit reply. We will campaign from door to door in an effort to save Eretz Yisrael from Meretz."

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid wondered "what my friend Shimon suggests. Does he want to further peace with Syria with the help of NRP and a settle-

ment with the Palestinians with the aid of Tsomet?"

NRP MK Avnet Shaki told Channel 1 that the NRP wouldn't join a government which will give up the Golan and territorial contiguity in Judea and Samaria.

Meanwhile former Tel Aviv mayor Shlomo Lahat — who during his tenure was nominally a Likud member, despite his consistently ultra-dovish outlook — will head a non-partisan Citizens for Peres group, which will be able to run advertisements and raise funds outside what is allowed the parties and the candidates themselves — *From The Jerusalem Post*

Iran takes U.S. to international court over covert programme

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has taken legal action against the United States for its undercover programme against the Islamic republic at the international court of justice at the Hague, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said Sunday.

In an interview with the Iran News, he did not give any details on the nature of the action taken or the date when the suit was filed.

The minister merely said the proceedings were based on "international laws and the Algiers Declaration" a non-interference pact

signed between the two countries after the release of American hostages in Iran in 1980.

Washington has adopted a \$20-million programme for covert action aimed at moderating Iran's Islamic regime. Iranian leaders have blasted the move as a blatant act of interference in Iran's internal affairs.

Mr. Velayati also said the United States had "no choice but to change its policies" towards Iran as past experience had shown that it would not carry on trying to impose its will

when it met with resistance.

The covert plan, adopted last month, was the latest in a string of measures taken by Washington against Iran amid U.S. accusations that it supports terrorism, charges strongly denied by Tehran.

In June, the United States imposed economic sanctions against the Islamic republic and urged its allies to follow suit.

The minister urged the world's other industrial countries not to follow the U.S. example of seeking to isolate Iran economically.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	14:59	15:28	16:46
Tel: 773111-19	..... 'Aar	..... Maghreb	..... Isha
PROGRAMME TWO			
14:00 Bonkers (cartoon)			
14:30 Richie Rich			
15:00 Playabout			
15:15 Bustle Loose			
15:40 Doc. — Animals of the Mediterranean			
16:10 Okavango			
17:00 Ordy			
17:15 Cupido			
17:20 Serie — Les Compagnons de L'Adventure			
17:50 Magazine — C'Est Pas Sorcier			
18:20 Family Programme — L'Ecole de Famille			
19:00 News in French			
19:15 Magazine — Cinq Sur Cinq			
19:30 News Headlines			
19:35 McHale's Navy			
20:00 Invention			
20:25 Hawaii Five — O			
21:10 Doc. — The Missing Years			
22:00 News in English			
22:25 Doc. — A Journey Across the Land of Islam			
22:40 Drama — Perfect Soundbuds			
23:10 Drama — Taurus Rising			
23:30 Comedy — Ellen			
PRAYER TIMES			
04:53 Fajr			
06:11 Sunrise/Dawn			
11:50 Dhuhr			

to partly cloudy and winds southeasterly moderate to stiff. On Wednesday and Thursday, it will be sunny with temperatures rising.

In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northeasterly moderate and temperatures in the 70s.

*Min./Max. temp.

Amman	.....	61/5
Ajlun	.....	18/21
Aqaba	.....	41/46
Jordan Valley	.....	10/ 21
Yesterday's high temperatures:		
Amman 13, Aqaba 21. Humidity		
recorded: Amman, 65 per cent,		
Aqaba 39 per cent.		

USEFUL TELEPHONE

NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Bilal Al Sayyid	.....	890280
Dr. Osama Al Hussini	.....	847289
Dr. Khalil Abu Marjoub	.....	779791
Dr. Mohamed Al Lubied	.....	683855
Fordows pharmacy	.....	176336
Al Ascupa pharmacy	.....	637055
Nareukh pharmacy	.....	625672
Al Salam pharmacy	.....	636730
Al Nour pharmacy	.....	640645
Shuabati pharmacy	.....	637662
Arasouk pharmacy	.....	623670
Najdi pharmacy	.....	847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qunu	.....	281741
Ajlun pharmacy	.....	(-)

New PSD chief sends letter to King

AMMAN (Petra) — New Public Security Department (PSD) Director Nasouh Moheiddin Sunday sent a letter in His Majesty King Hussein expressing his gratitude for his appointment and saying that he was determined to do all he could to serve the King and the nation.

In his letter Major General Moheiddin paid tribute to the King's efforts over the years to modernise the security and police services

in Jordan.

The PSD chief said he and his colleagues in the department will exert all their efforts in shouldering the responsibility of preserving security and stability and work relentlessly to execute the King's directives.

Gen. Moheiddin succeeded Lieutenant General Abdul Rahman Adwan who retired from active service last week.



Nasouh Moheiddin

Ministry promises to secure loans on feasible municipal projects

MADABA (Petra) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzak Tubeishat Sunday said the ministry will arrange for local councils to obtain loans from the Cities and Villages Development Bank (CVDB) when studies on the proposed projects prove feasible.

Speaking during a visit to Madaba Municipality, Dr. Tubeishat said the ministry will thoroughly study the needs of local councils and help find solutions for them, especially in matters connected with wastewater treatment plants. He said it will also attempt to facilitate loans from the CVDB

to purchase lands for public gardens.

He announced a ministry donation of JD 5,000 to Madaba Municipality saying the funds are needed to purchase furniture for the municipality's town hall and insecticides.

Madaba Mayor Mahmoud Abu Qaddoura briefed the minister on the municipality's financial situation and proposed ideas for improving its services.

The Madaba Governor, Abdullah Hisban, outlined the needs of various villages and towns within the Madaba Governorate, focusing mainly on wastewater treatment plants.



Abdul Razzak Tubeishat

Japan donates equipment to Rosary Sisters Hospital

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government of Japan donated \$82,424 worth of medical equipment to Irbid's Rosary Sisters Hospital within the framework of the Japanese Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Projects (GAGP).

The grant contract for the

equipment was signed Sunday by Ambassador of Japan in Amman Takayuki Kimura and Sister Scolastica Avedissian, Mother Superior of Rosary Sisters Hospital.

The donated medical equipment consisting of a chemistry analyser, a

paragon electrophoresis system and a gas steriliser are expected to contribute to the improvement of the medical services in Irbid and its surrounding areas, a Japanese embassy statement said Sunday.

Anti-Israeli attack aborted — paper

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordanian security last week aborted an attempt by three Islamists who were planning a major suicidal attack on Israeli targets west of the River Jordan, according to the weekly Al Majd newspaper.

The weekly said that the security forces arrested the

three men early last week while riding in a car at Deir Allah region of the Jordan Valley and found the car packed with explosives and heading towards the river.

According to Al Majd report the three men were: Architect Makramah Al Gharaibeh, Yousef Abdul Rahim Rabab'ah, who holds an MA degree in archaeology

and Ali Mohammad Al Faqir (holds MA in Sharia). Relatives of the three men told Al Majd that their sons were now subjected to thorough questioning aimed at exposing all implications in the case and to reveal the identity of those behind the affair.

Iraqi opposition opens office

(Continued from page 1)

democracy to Iraq," Mr. Alawi said. "Our mission here is purely political and informational. That is to explain the suffering of the Iraqi people and to lobby, from Jordan, for our just cause."

Mr. Alawi denied the movement had any links with General Hussein Kamel, the architect of Iraq's weapon programme, who defected to

Jordan last August with his brother and their two wives the daughters of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

He said: "Gen. Kamel has his own programme and the movement does not have any relationship with him."

He said that Iraqi opposition groups do not have a unified programme but are working closely with each other.

"For the first time, the Iraqi opposition is working

together in a healthy and democratic atmosphere," he said. "We agree on many things but we have our differences and we deal with them in a civilised manner."

He insisted that the bulk of the Accord Movement is in Iraq. "There is a fraction of Iraqi military and Iraqi people here but our strong base is in Iraq," he said.

Mr. Alawi thanked the Jordanian government for housing the movement.

Arafat to curb violence ahead of Israeli elections

Continued from page 1

The police said they were acting on orders of Yasser Arafat's autonomy government "in response to articles critical of the Palestinian (National) Authority (PNA)," he said.

A sign posted on the door of the Al Istiqbal offices Sunday and bearing the official stamp of the PNA police prohibited anyone from entering the premises.

There was no immediate response from Palestinian officials.

Islamic Jihad is vehemently opposed to the autonomy agreements signed between Israel and Mr. Arafat's Palestine

Liberation Organisation (PLO). It refused to participate in last month's Palestinian elections.

Earlier this month Islamic Jihad accused the Palestinian police of executing two of its militants who were killed during a police raid on a home in Gaza City.

Police said they killed Ayman Razania and Amar Al Harash after being fired on during the raid, although witnesses said the two men were unarmed.

The pair were wanted by Israeli authorities in connection with a 1995 suicide bombing which killed 21 Israelis.

PLO, Israel make progress

Continued from page 1

would be done within two months of the first session of the newly elected Palestinian Legislative Council, due to meet from March 7 to 10.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said Israel would let all the PNC's 630 members into the Palestinian territories for the meeting.

But he also warned that Israel will not go ahead with planned negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories unless the PLO charter is changed. The negotiations are due to begin in May.

The PFLP last week submitted a list of its PNC members reportedly seeking to return to the territories and which included Dr. Habash's name.

Preparatory meeting approves principles for Habitat conference
Jordan to host meeting to draft unified concepts on housing issues of Arab World

NEW YORK (Petra) — Delegates concluded a meeting in New York aimed at paving the way for an international conference on the work of the UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in June by approving a declaration of principles and an international working plan on Habitat issues and sustainable development in the third world, according to Youssef Hiyasat, the head of Jordan's delegation to the meeting.

Mr. Hiyasat, who is director general of the Housing and Urban Development Department (HUDD), Sunday said the international conference, to be held in Istanbul from June 3 to 14, will review and endorse the declaration of principles, tackle other important issues and examine Habitat programmes of the last 20 years and proposals for the future.

In the 11-day preparatory meeting in New York, organised by Habitat, the international gathering of delegates discussed ways to ensure sustainable development, tackle poverty, protect the environment, promote human rights, and encourage cooperation and partnership among nations to safeguard the environment for the coming generations.

The delegates also reviewed the problems of unemployment, preserving historic heritage and improving the economies of urban and rural regions.

The declaration of principles postponed decision on other proposals which raised differing views to the Istanbul parley in June.



The Abu Nsir housing project was undertaken by the Housing and Urban Development Department in the early 1980's to initially provide low-income homes to government employees (file photo)

Referring to the Arab World, Mr. Hiyasat said Amman will host a meeting on March 11 of mayors and heads of local councils in the Arab World to unify views and concepts to be submitted to the Istanbul conference. He said that at

that conference governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will be represented.

The preceding Amman conference, which will be chaired by Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbad, is to be organised by the Greater Amman Municipality, HUDD, the Amman office of Habitat and the General Conference of Arab Cities. Jordan has prepared

strategy on housing and urban development to be submitted to the Istanbul conference, according to Mr. Hiyasat.

The strategy was drafted by the public and private sectors in the Kingdom, Mr. Hiyasat added.

He said that the Istanbul conference will offer Jordan a good opportunity to present its experiences as well as learn about and benefit from the experiences of other nations.

In his address to the New York meeting, Mr. Hiyasat said, he outlined Jordan's endeavours in housing fields and housing programmes achieved so far in the country.

He was accompanied to the New York meeting by representatives of the private and public sectors in Jordan.

Unions threaten to boycott two banks

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Members of the Jordanian Professional Union Sunday threatened to "boycott" Cairo-Amman Bank and the Arab Land Bank if they continue "their arbitrary measures against their employees," a statement issued by the Council of Presidents of Professional Unions said.

The council, which comprises all union presidents, demanded that the banks should reconsider their "arbitrary dismissal" of Cairo-Amman Bank employee Akram Nimri and the sacking from the Arab Land Bank of the three employees: Shawqi Ghannam, Barjas May'ah and Salman Al Jariri.

In the statement, the council condemned the dismissal of the employees and described it as inconsistent with the labour law and the Constitution.

President of the General Union for Bank Workers (GUBW) Abdullah Khalil said there was no legal reason for the dismissal of the employees.

Last week the GUBW staged a three-hour sit-in in

front of the Cairo-Amman Bank in downtown Amman, in order to draw public attention to the workers' dilemma, Mr. Khalil said.

He added that the sit-in was an attempt to force banks to stop what he called arbitrary practices after all other channels of communication had failed.

He said in a previous statement that the GUBW will hold a conference at the Professional Association Complex in Shmeisani in March, which will be attended by parliament members, representatives of the press and various unions to discuss further labour actions.

The GUBW has also been in contact with Jordanian political parties, the Lower House of Parliament and the Ministry of Labour asking for their interference and the reinstatement of the dismissed workers.

The dismissal of the employees was a decision taken by the board of directors, said a bank source who asked not to be identified. The source added that he does not expect the board to reverse its decision.

Police question three suspects in connection with murder of Egyptian
Electricity kills 23-year-old woman

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Police Sunday were questioning three men in connection with the death of a 23-year-old Egyptian national who was found killed last year, official sources said.

According to the sources, the victim, identified only as Masoud A., had suffered from a blow to the head and had his throat cut and his body was found in a red suitcase left in the bus terminal near Mamoura Hotel in Wihdat on Dec. 30.

"We have questioned one suspect, and we still have two more suspects to question before we conclude our investigation," the official source said.

He told the Jordan Times that the authorities had strong evidence to link their suspects to the

murder. He would not elaborate, however.

Luggage porters at the bus terminal became suspicious of the red suitcase because it was left unattended and later called police.

During the past two months, police placed several advertisements in the daily newspapers in an attempt to identify the man.

Other suspects held

Also Sunday, police said they have arrested several suspects in connection with the killing Sunday of a 50-year-old man in Ashrafieh.

According to official sources, a fight started between vegetable merchants in Ashrafieh which resulted in the killing of one merchant.

The official said that police apprehended sev-

eral suspects in connection with the crime.

Meanwhile, in Irbid a 23-year-old woman was killed Saturday of electrocution in Hartha, near Irbid, according to Public Security Department (PSD) reports.

The victim's brother told the authorities that his sister, Hanan Salah was electrocuted by the washing machine, the report said adding that the woman died instantly.

Also on Saturday in Tafleh PSD reports said that a two-year-old child was killed when wall bricks fell on her head killing her instantly.

Majidah Fayed was sitting under an old wall when three wall bricks fell on her head, the report said.

Police said they were investigating both incidents.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* "Lacombe Lucien," at the French Cultural Centre, at 8:30 p.m.

PLAY

"Ramadan Supermarket," (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Abstract (plastic) art by Mirvat Emile Wahhab at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery (until March 5).

* Paintings by Jordanian and other Arab artists at Alia Art Gallery (until March 5).

* Engravings by French artists at the French Cultural Centre (until Feb. 29).

Chechen rebels drive aid trucks into hills

MOSCOW (R) — Chechen guerrillas who seized a convoy of food aid have driven the trucks into rebel-controlled mountains, ITAR-TASS news agency said Sunday.

Another group of up to 500 rebels was dug in around the village of Novogrozny in eastern Chechnya and tension remained high in the breakaway southern region, the agency reported.

TASS said about 50 rebels seized the 18 trucks Saturday. They were loaded with flour, butter, baby food and other supplies for villagers in Achkhoy-Martan 35 kilometres southwest of the Chechen capital Grozny.

It quoted the press service of the Moscow-installed Chechen government as saying the guerrillas drove the trucks towards the mountain village of Alkhazur, which is controlled by forces loyal to rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev.

The fate of the 36 people accompanying the convoy was unknown, TASS said.

Interfax News Agency reported late Saturday that the convoy was in rebel hands close to the village of Gikhi, five kilometres from Achkhoy-Martan but was blocked by police.

There was no immediate information on whether an attempt would be made to free the trucks.

TASS separately quoted the Russian Interior Ministry press centre in Chechnya

as saying the situation remained tense.

Rebels attacked an Interior Ministry post near Achkhoy-Martan and the Russian side said it suffered casualties.

It said Russian forces estimated up to 500 guerrillas had built an extensive network of trenches and shelters around Novogrozny.

Russian Television reported Saturday that troops had sealed off the village after exchanging fire with rebels there since Friday.

Talks between Russian forces, who were positioned two kilometres from Novogrozny, Chechen government officials and the village council had failed to resolve the situation.

The village leaders said the guerrillas would remain in Novogrozny and would not surrender their arms, TASS said.

One police officer was killed and seven police and Interior Ministry troops were wounded Saturday when they tried to approach the village.

Novogrozny was the location where rebel Commander Salman Raduyev released hostages after a raid by his Lone Wolf guerrilla group into neighbouring Dagestan.

President Boris Yeltsin, who said last week he will seek re-election in June, has pledged to end the 14-month-old Chechen conflict before then.



Fishermen try to clear boats which were capsized by tidal waves late on Saturday after a powerful earthquake hit Indonesia's Irian Jaya province, at Misaki Port in Tosashimizu, western Japan Sunday. Several thousand Japanese households were urged to evacuate because of fears of tidal waves triggered by the quake in Indonesia (Reuters photo)

Indonesian earthquake toll rises to 32

JAKARTA (R) — The death toll from a powerful earthquake that triggered tidal waves in Indonesia's Irian Jaya province rose to 23 Sunday with 15 people missing and rescuers still trying to find more bodies.

The official Antara News Agency reported the figures Sunday, a day after the earthquake measuring 7.5 on the Richter Scale hit Biak Island and several coastal areas on the northern part of the Indonesian half of New Guinea Island. Police said 18 people were reported injured so far.

Antara quoted the secretary of Biak Regency, R. Yap, as saying the death toll could rise because it was still difficult to collect information from other areas on the island.

"It is difficult...because there are districts which could not be contacted until this time after bridges linking those areas were cut," he was quoted as saying.

The earthquake, with the epicentre in the Pacific Ocean 106 kilometres east of Biak, was the biggest to hit Indonesia this year and struck at 12:59 p.m. (0559 GMT).

The quake caused tidal waves between two metres and four metres high in coastal areas Saturday.

In Japan, several thousand households were urged to evacuate late Saturday on fears of tidal waves triggered by the quake, media reports said Sunday.

Japan's Meteorological Agency said tsunami warnings were issued after tidal waves as high as 103 cm were registered late Saturday off Chichijima Island in the Ogasawara Island chain in the Pacific, about 1,000 kilometres, south of Tokyo.

Agency officials said it was the first time in 36 years for Japan to be hit by one-metre tidal waves caused by a big quake in a distant area. No major damage was reported.

Antara said no other tidal waves were recorded Sunday,

but added that residents living on New Guinea island felt several small aftershocks.

An official with the Meteorology Office in Jakarta told Reuters Sunday a fresh aftershock jolted the area at 0225 GMT and was felt in Serui and Nabire on the western half of the island.

"It is unclear if the aftershocks were felt in Biak because it was very difficult to reach the area by telephone," he said.

A police officer, speaking through cracking telephone lines, earlier said from Biak rescuers were still searching for more bodies inside Biak town and in coastal areas.

Antara quoted Secretary R. Yap as saying Biak International Airport would be temporarily closed for evening flights.

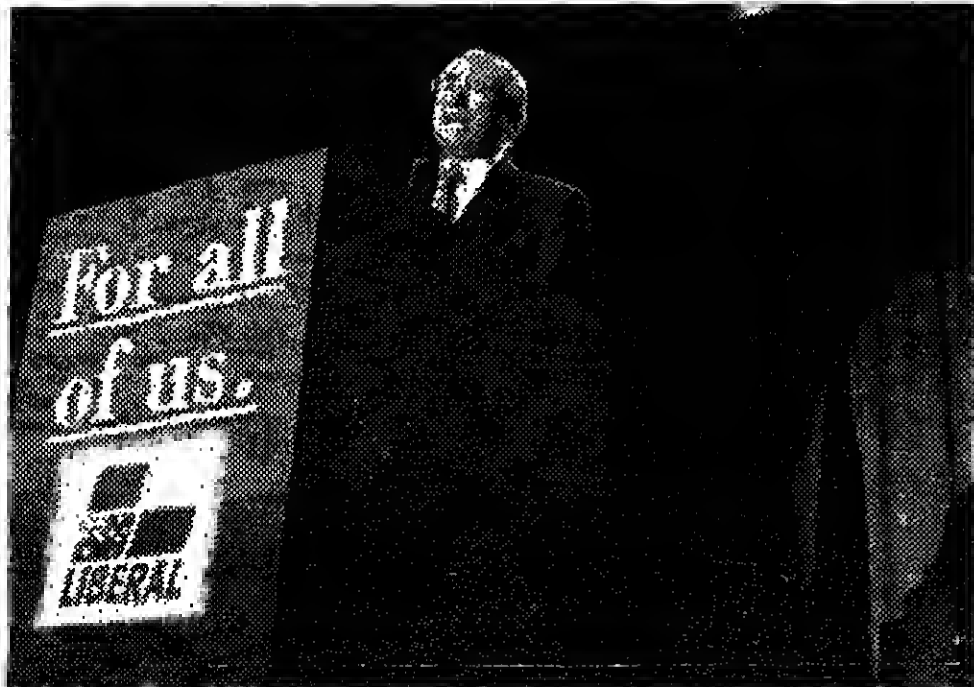
He said the airport suffered about 1.2 billion rupiah in damage (\$522,875) and added the loss caused by earthquake in Biak alone could reach 10 billion rupiah (\$4.3 million).

Antara gave no other details. Irian Jaya is the area where separatist rebels are holding 13 hostages, including six Europeans, who were seized on Jan. 8.

Biak Island, with a population of more than 82,000 people, is known for palm-fringed, pristine beaches with beautiful coral reefs. It was not clear if there were foreigners among the casualties.

An official with the state-owned Merpati Airlines, which organises daily flights to Biak from Jakarta, said Sunday the earthquake did not disturb their service.

Antara said local authorities had urged people not to stay inside their homes until further notice. Hundreds of people in Biak spent the night outdoors Saturday fearing more tremors.



Liberal Party leader John Howard delivers his policy speech at the Liberal Party policy launch at the Ryde Civic Centre in Sydney Sunday. Mr. Howard hopes to lead his coalition out of 13 years in opposition to win government at the March 2 federal election (Reuters photo)

Australian conservatives add tax cuts lure to seal Keating's fate

SYDNEY (R) — Australian conservative leader John Howard, already favoured to win the March 2 federal election, moved to seal Labour Prime Minister Paul Keating's fate Sunday with a promise of tax cuts to help families.

Mr. Howard's plan answered the long-standing complaint that the Australian tax system gives no help to families and will be difficult for Labour to answer without finding offsetting cuts.

"We will implement from Jan. 1, 1997, a billion Australian dollars (\$750 million) family tax package which will be one of the most significant tax reforms undertaken by government," Mr. Howard told about 700 cheering supporters at the Liberal-National opposition's formal campaign launch in Sydney.

Under a Liberal-National administration, people would pay less tax if they had children and especially if one parent stayed home to mind them, Mr. Howard said.

Opinion polls already show Mr. Howard is a clear favourite over Mr. Keating, with a solid and seemingly immovable majority of voters endorsing his simple campaign message about the 13-year-old Labour administration: "Enough is enough."

"When Labour came to power Australia owed the rest of the world about 23,000 Australian dollars million," Mr. Howard said. "We now owe the rest of the world 180,000 Australian dollars million," he said. "Nothing symbolises more (completely) than that disgraceful figure the total failure of Labour's economic management over the last 13 years."

The \$180 billion is the net foreign debt owed by Australian public and private borrowers.

The Australian election has adopted a strong focus on the government's finances,

and neither side has been willing to "pork-barrel" without offsetting spending cuts or new revenue.

Mr. Howard could offer the one billion Australian dollars a year tax cuts because last week he said he would slash spending on the public service.

Social security and similar benefits were untouched, but he told almost every department it would lose staff if he won.

The tax cut is only the latest election giveaway.

Both sides have promised better health care for all and an upgraded Pacific Highway along the east coast.

Mr. Howard says he would set up a one billion Australian dollar environmental fund and Mr. Keating would spend about 300 million Australian dollars on the railways.

Both sides have also aimed dozens of little spending packages at specific regions or even electoral districts — a new ferry for the state of Tasmania, buses in Brisbane, and facilities at Adelaide Airport.

But the opposition has been able to offer more because of its planned public service cuts.

One Labour source Sunday speculated that Mr. Keating might try to match Mr. Howard's tax cuts for families.

"This (the tax cuts) is a serious vote winner," the source said, although he could not suggest how Mr. Keating would pay for an equivalent scheme.

Even if he could find the money, Mr. Keating would have to overcome a strong public feeling that he broke a tax-cut promise he made in the 1993 election.

When doubts were raised in 1993 about whether those tax cuts would be delivered, Mr. Keating assured the public they were already in law.

Tajik peace talks end with no ceasefire deal

ALMATY, Kazakhstan (R)

— U.N.-sponsored talks to bring peace to Tajikistan ended inconclusively on Sunday with failure to extend a fragile ceasefire.

Agreement to invite exiled opposition leaders to a special session of parliament.

The U.N. diplomat mediating the three weeks of talks, aimed at ending a three-year-old conflict between the Moscow-backed Tajik government and the opposition, said the talks had kept alive the peace process in the Central Asian state.

"The results were modest but important," said U.N. mediator Ramiro Piriz Ballon, reached by telephone in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat where the talks were held.

"We have kept the process alive, but the setback was that we were not able to agree on an extension to the ceasefire."

Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet republics, and its politics are a maze of clan, regional and ethnic rivalries similar to those in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The government controls western Tajikistan, but never re-established control

over the thinly-populated Pamir Mountain region in the east.

In the recent fighting, government forces have been on the retreat in Tavildara, 200 kilometres east of Dushanbe, part of the narrow neck joining the two halves of the country.

The Dushanbe government and the exiled opposition have failed to agree on extending a much-violated ceasefire expiring on Feb. 26, jeopardising the mandate of U.N. ceasefire monitors in Tajikistan.

But they struck a deal on inviting opposition leaders back to Tajikistan — for the first time since they fled the country at the end of 1992 — to the special parliamentary session.

The talks were held against a background of increasing tension and violence in Tajikistan, a former Soviet republic of 5.7 million bordering Afghanistan and China.

Government delegation sources said the only positive result was the parliamentary session, expected in about three weeks. An opposition spokesman said the talks had achieved "almost nothing" but would continue.

White House denies it rejected Adams visa

WASHINGTON (R) — The White House Saturday denied a report that President Bill Clinton had refused to renew the U.S. visa of Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams until the party's IRA guerrilla allies resume their ceasefire.

"The story is not true," a spokesman said.

Britain's Sunday Telegraph said Mr. Clinton wanted to protest the resumption of the bombing campaign in London by the Irish Republican Army, which wants to drive Britain out of Northern Ireland.

Two people were killed by a truck bomb in London's docklands financial district a week ago and the British capital's theatre district was paralysed by the discovery of another bomb that was later defused.

Mr. Adams has to renew his U.S. visa every three months. He applied last month so that he could attend St. Patrick's Day celebrations on March 17 in Washington to mark Ireland's National Day.

Asked about the status of the application, the White House spokesman said the issue had not yet been confronted.

"Our focus is on getting the ceasefire re-established and on trying to get the twin-track process back on track. Questions relating to St. Patrick's Day are premature," the spokesman said.

The British government has taken the position that it will have no ministerial contacts with Mr. Adams until the ceasefire, which lasted 17 months, is resumed.

Meanwhile, writing in the editorial pages of the Washington Post on Sunday, Adams called for the British and Irish governments to set a date immediately for all-party talks without preconditions.

"While I am prepared to speak to the IRA, in my opinion persuading the IRA to recommence a ceasefire is only possible in the context of rebuilding the wider peace process," he said.

Mr. Adams drew a parallel between the Irish situation and the peace processes in South Africa and the Middle East.

"If those leaders lacked the courage to talk because of difficult setbacks, they would not have moved forward," he wrote. "On the contrary, rather than stopping dialogue they were spurred to intensify their efforts."

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Beware the Chinese Year of the Fire Rat

HONG KONG (R) — If you thought 1995 was a pig of a year, stop reading now. Chinese geomancers say the year of the rat already looks set to be one better forgotten. The problem, says fortune-teller Raymond Lo, is the world is entering the Year of the Fire Rat and "about to fall under the influence of diametrically opposing elements — fire and water. There could be turbulence, trouble...Perhaps even a war." The Year of the Pig, which ends Monday, fell under more harmonious elements. But this year the outlook for romance is only fair and for business mixed. Avoid "fire" businesses like smelters but "water" businesses like bars will be a good bet.

Belgian police halt licence plate play

BRUSSELS (R) — A motorist who fitted a retractable licence plate to his car to evade radar speeding checks has been caught by police, Belgian papers reported. The 23-year-old Belgian, who was fined a small sum, installed an electrical device which allowed him to retract the plate on his red sports car when he spotted a radar control. Police in Belgium measure car speeds with a radar which automatically photographs the licence plate of any offending car.

Kansas boy revived after ordeal in icy pond

LEAWOOD, Kansas (R) — A Kansas boy was in critical condition after rescue workers managed to revive him nearly one hour after he fell into an icy pond. Police said Kurt Olenkoff, 13, was not breathing and had no pulse when he was pulled from under the ice of a murky pond nearly 35 minutes after he first fell through Friday afternoon. Hoping that the freezing water had slowed Olenkoff's system, rescue workers took him to a nearby health centre and he began breathing nearly an hour after falling into the pond. Olenkoff was later flown to a Kansas City hospital, where he was listed in critical condition.

Full-speed ahead for China's 'bullet train'

BEIJING (R) — China has approved large-scale production of a "bullet train", the high-speed Dongfeng-11 diesel locomotive, the official Xinhua news agency said. A key state project under the 1990-1995 five-year plan, the Dongfeng-11 (east wind-11) is capable of speeds up to 180 km per hour, it said. China's fastest locomotive won state approval after a series of trial runs on the Guangzhou-Shenzhen express railway line, the Shanghai-Nanjing line and the Beijing-Qinhuangdao line, it said.

U.S. outpost seeks business, not ghosts

ANCHORAGE (R) — Worried that inaction might create the world's largest and most remote ghost town, Alaska federal officials are wondering what to do with a soon-to-be-abandoned U.S. Navy station. The problem is that the Adak naval air facility is a long way from anywhere, being located 1,200 miles southwest of Anchorage in the bottom arc of the sparsely populated Aleutian Islands. Once a busy military post during World War II which housed up to 100,000 people, the island later became a surveillance centre to guard against Soviet incursions in the north Pacific and Bering Sea.

Media access a big issue in Italy election campaign

ROME (R) — As Italy's bitterly divided parties geared up for the April 21 general election, the issue of equal access to the broadcast media surfaced Saturday as one of the thorniest issues of the campaign.

"The electoral battle begins with the television issue," said Saturday's edition of Rome newspaper La Repubblica, adding that unless clear regulations were put in place soon the country would face another "wild west" round of electioneering.

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro dissolved parliament Friday after Italy's feuding parties failed to agree on constitutional reforms to give Italy more stable government.

The de facto campaign, which promises to be fierce and dirty, started almost immediately when each side acrimoniously blamed the other for the stalemate that sent Italians to a general vote for the third time in four years.

As what newspapers called a "poisonous" atmosphere between the two blocs thickened, the television issue shot to the forefront — as it did in the last national elections in 1994.

Centre-left parties accused former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of using his three private television networks to help rocket him to power in the March 1994 elections.

But Mr. Berlusconi, whose Forza Italia party will lead the centre-right Freedom Alliance in the next elections, has often accused state broadcaster

RAI of putting out programmes with a leftist slant.

In an editorial headlined "A vote without rules," La Stampa newspaper said Saturday that Italy seemed to be condemned to a nightmare in which its political problems were never resolved.

"Two years ago, when Berlusconi went to government, we all knew perfectly well that Italy urgently needed new rules to regulate television and conflict of interest," the paper said.

La Stampa added that

Italians had become accustomed to considering their political situation "a latrine" that could be occasionally cleaned. Now, it was more like a "lift blocked between floors," it wrote.

Italy has a provisional law in place governing the use of the media during elections. It was passed last year by a cabinet decree and has been extended several times since after parliament failed to approve a definitive version of the bill.

It is up for renewal again on March 18, about a month

before the elections, but there is some disagreement over whether Mr. Dini's government, which is now in a caretaker capacity, should renew it as it stands.

The "par condicio" (equal access) decree issued for last year's regional elections bans the broadcast of political advertisements in the month before a poll and the publication of opinion surveys in the three weeks prior to voting.

It also extended the rules on equal access to include television chat shows and

beefed up the powers of a media ombudsman, giving him the right to suspend offending programmes.

The centre-left, worried by Mr. Berlusconi's mighty television empire, wants to extend the reach of the bill to 45 days.

Gianfranco Fini, head of the far-right National Alliance, a key party in Mr. Berlusconi's alliance, rejected the proposal outright, damming it as a "freedom killer."



The Sea Empress, the supertanker containing 130,000 tonnes of North Sea crude oil which broke free from tugs in the mouth of the Milford Haven estuary overnight, Sunday. A rescue team has been air-lifted onto the stricken tanker to begin to assess the damage (Reuters photo)

Crew abandon stricken tanker off Welsh coast

MILFORD HAVEN, Wales (R) — The skeleton crew of a stricken supertanker abandoned ship Sunday, leaving it to be battered by high winds and heavy seas off the Welsh coast.

Pollution control experts and wildlife experts feared that the Sea Empress, which is listing badly, could cause a major environmental disaster.

Rescue officials said salvage experts and the last 14 members of the Russian crew were taken off when the tanker's stern began banging against the seabed during a storm. Waves broke over the entire length of its giant deck.

The local lighthouse and surrounding cottages on the Welsh coast were abandoned amid fears of a gas explosion aboard the tanker loaded with 130,000 tonnes of light crude oil.

Salvage experts estimated that about 300 tonnes of oil escaped from the supertanker's ruptured cargo tanks overnight but the leaking has now apparently stopped.

The Liberian-registered Sea Empress ran aground for the second time in three days Saturday evening when tow lines snapped to tugs trying to heave it clear.

Two helicopters braved the storm and force eight winds to lift the remaining crew members off.

Coastguard surveillance aircraft continued to fly over the 147,000-tonne deadweight tanker monitoring the damage.

Two smaller tankers are on standby for use by salvage teams in pumping the remainder of the oil off the Sea Empress.

A powerful sea-going tug was heading towards the Milford Haven estuary to help stabilise the Sea Empress in 50-knot winds.

"We have teams of volunteers in place to collect oiled birds. But for every bird we find, another 500 may die undetected at sea," warned marine conservation officer Brian Elliott after the oil started to drift ashore.

Conservationists say the area is home to about 15,000 birds as well as seals and dolphins.

This is the worst accident in Britain since the supertanker Braer broke up on rocks in the Shetland Isles off the north-west tip of Scotland in January 1993, spilling 80,000 tonnes.

Britain then brought in new rules for ships operating in its waters including tougher inspection procedures and designated high risk areas.

The Sea Empress, built in Spain in 1993, is a single-hulled vessel with one steel layer separating cargo and sea.

Many modern tankers are built with double hulls following a spate of tanker accidents, including the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off the northwest U.S. Coast which caused widespread environmental damage and needed a multi-billion dollar cleanup.

Parliament meeting to draw poll battle-lines

NEW DELHI (R) — India's parliament meets next week to pass an interim budget before a general election set for April, but lawmakers said Sunday the farewell session could also draw the battle-lines for the coming polls.

Three major groups straddling the left and the right of the political spectrum have emerged as front-runners in the polls, widely expected to produce a hung parliament.

A national front-left coalition of communists, socialists and lower-caste Hindu groups is pitted against a more organised rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's Congress Party.

Analysts said the parties would use the parliamentary session to sift the poll issues and seek alliances with the smaller but crucial players.

Congress, in a minority in the upper house, is also vying to improve its

strength in the continuing elections for the Rajya Sabha (upper house).

These elections should be over by February 26 when both houses of parliament assemble to hear President Shankar Dayal Sharma's address, a traditional speech outlining the government's policies at the start of the budget session.

Mr. Rao's cabinet approved the address Saturday. But official sources said a proposal to introduce a law in next week's session to set up a watchdog body against corruption in high places was not discussed at the meeting.

The issue would almost certainly dominate the proceedings, deputies said.

An \$18 million bribery scandal last month led to the resignation of three of Mr. Rao's senior ministers and forced BJP President Lal Krishna Advani to quit parliament.

Two deputies of the socialist Janata Dal Party, a national front partner, have

also been named in the affair.

"Corruption is the core issue," said Saifuddin Choudhury, a communist deputy whose party is one of the few major groups not named in the unfolding scandal.

The next elections will be fought between those who are genuinely ready to fight the menace and those who use political offices to line up their pockets," Mr. Choudhury said. "The parliament session will show up many red faces."

Most analysts said the issue was sufficiently explosive to trigger a turbulent session.

"The attack will be on the prime minister," a BJP spokesman said. "Advani has been named to hide Rao's own guilt."

BJP leaders are worried that bribery charges against Mr. Advani in the affair have seriously harmed their campaign against corruption in high places.

But the party says it will

also target the Janata Dal over an unfolding financial bungle in the eastern state of Bihar, its stronghold, involving billions of rupees in the state's animal husbandry ministry.

The BJP wants the central bureau of investigation (CBI), probing the \$18 million money laundering and bribery case, to investigate Mr. Rao, saying a key accused in the affair told the CBI that Mr. Rao accepted bribes through intermediaries.

The government spokesman and Mr. Rao's Congress Party have denied the allegations.

The supreme court, supervising the investigations, will hear from the CBI on February 22 whether there are enough grounds to investigate Mr. Rao.

The bribes-for-favours scandal, in which 115 politicians and civil servants were named in diaries seized by police in 1992, is likely to be a major issue in the general elections.

The government spokesman and Mr. Rao's Congress Party have denied the allegations.

The council, established last week, is led by Premier Lien Chan and includes ministers and security chiefs.

Newspapers quoted air force Commander-in-Chief Tang Fei as saying that it was likely that China would test fire M-class, medium-range missiles during the exercise.

Gen. Tang said that China's No.2 M-class missile platoon has moved southeast from Jiangxi province in Fujian province which lies opposite Taiwan, apparently positioning itself for action, the United Daily News said.

In July last year, China test fired M-class missiles from Jiangxi province into the sea about 150 kilometres north of Taiwan in an exercise which severely shook business confidence here and sent stock prices tumbling.

China has regarded Taiwan as a province within its territory since 1949 and threatens to attack it if Taipei drops a pledge to reunify and espouses independence instead.

Infuriated by a landmark trip Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui made to the United States last June, Beijing has launched a series of military exercises which analysts say are a warning to Taipei not to pursue independence.

Taipei has said the war games are an attempt to foment social instability ahead of this island's inaugural presidential elections on March 23, which Mr. Lee is expected to win.

Poles vote in referendum on sharing state assets

WARSAW (R) — Poles voted Sunday in a complex, five-question referendum on privatisation strategy to decide on sharing out state assets among citizens.

The poll was called by Lech Walesa on behalf of his allies in the Solidarity Trade Union as one of his last acts as Polish president after losing November elections to ex-communist Aleksander Kwasniewski.

He posed one question: "are you for carrying out a general transfer of (state) property to the citizen?"

The ex-communist party dominating the ruling left-wing coalition government says the vote is unnecessary because Poland already has

a policy for gradually selling off state firms, while giving ordinary people a chance to buy a stake in 500 firms for a nominal price.

The democratic left alliance (SLD) brands Solidarity's proposals for a mass share-out of remaining state firms and other assets to citizens in the form of free coupons as unrealistic.

The SLD-dominated parliament has added further questions on specific aspects of privatisation strategy, which have made the referendum complicated and muddled the issues for many voters.

Among early participants was Poland's Roman Catholic primate, Cardinal Jozef

Glomp, who said he was taking part because private property was the basis of all ethics.

But Cardinal Glomp said the issues were not fully clear, questioning whether they had been sufficiently explained to voters.

"I think no-one fully understands the economic and political implications emerging from this referendum," PAP news agency quoted Card. Glomp as saying.

Polling stations are open from 6.00 a.m. (0500 GMT) to 10.00 p.m. (2100 GMT) and official results are due to be announced Tuesday.

If more than half the 28 million voters take part, the

verdict will be legally binding and parliament will have two months in which to draft laws interpreting and implementing it.

If not, the government can carry on as before.

Solidarity, backed in this respect by the church, has urged voters to take part, while the SLD has left its supporters to decide for themselves — making the exercise in part a test of strength for the influence of the union and its political allies in opposition.

An opinion poll published Friday suggested that 52 per cent of voters planned to take part, but only 37 per cent were sure they would.

China 'may fire' missiles in war games

TAIPEI (R) — China is likely to test fire missiles during a military exercise near its rival Taiwan which may start later this week, major newspapers said Sunday.

The mass-circulation United Daily News said that a top-level council on current tensions with China has discussed a range of rapid responses to any possible provocation from China, including a mainland attack on one of Taiwan's outlying islands.

"At a meeting yesterday, the council discussed fully our responses to any provocations which the Chinese Communists may make during the course of their exercise," the newspaper said.

"Among issues discussed were rumours of an attack on one of our outlying islands but a member of the council emphasised that the contents of the discussions on this was secret," added the newspaper, quoting members of the council.

Several newspapers quoted Taiwan intelligence sources as saying that the exercises were unlikely to start before the end of Lunar New Year holidays Wednesday or Thursday.

The council, established last week, is led by Premier Lien Chan and includes ministers and security chiefs.

Newspapers quoted air force Commander-in-Chief Tang Fei as saying that it was likely that China would test fire M-class, medium-range missiles during the exercise.

Gen. Tang said that China's No.2 M-class missile platoon has moved southeast from Jiangxi province in Fujian province which lies opposite Taiwan, apparently positioning itself for action, the United Daily News said.

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South Korea to announce exclusive zone if Japan acts

SEOUL (R) — South Korea will declare its own Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under the U.N. Law of the Sea Treaty, but only if Japan, with whom it is currently in a territorial dispute, acts first, news reports said Sunday.

Local news media quoted Seoul Foreign Ministry officials as saying Japan is expected to declare an EEZ Tuesday when a regular cabinet meeting is scheduled to be held in Tokyo.

Japanese media have also reported the declaration would be made Tuesday.

If Japan includes the disputed island of Tokdo, known in Japan as Takeshima, in its own EEZ, the South Korean government will also include Tokdo in its zone, the reports quoted the officials as saying.

"If Japan, following its formal announcement of EEZ, insists that Tokdo is part of its territory through any other events such as news conferences, we will deal sternly with it by immediately declaring an EEZ including Tokdo," the influential Chosun Ilbo daily quoted a Foreign Ministry official as saying.

If Japan avoids mentioning Tokdo and notes only general principles in declaring its EEZ, however, the Seoul government will follow suit, Seoul officials were quoted as saying.

The Chosun Daily said both Seoul and Tokyo governments were believed to have already agreed not to mention Tokdo in their respective EEZ announcements.

A ministry official Sunday neither confirmed nor denied the reports.

Tokdo, actually composed of two tiny islets, has been the subject of a bitter dispute between the two countries since Tokyo claimed its sovereignty of the island, which has been guarded by Korean Security Police since 1954.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda sparked Korean outrage this month by lodging a diplomatic protest against work that South Korea had begun to improve a wharf on the islands and laying claims to the islands.

The Seoul government and members of parliament have slammed Japan over its claims. Foreign Minister

Gong Ro-myung has said Seoul would go ahead with the construction work.

South Korea Thursday staged a joint exercise involving navy, air force and maritime police around the islands, partly in protest against the Japanese claims.

Japan has expressed its displeasure to South Korea for the military manoeuvres, but stopped short of a diplomatic protest.

Many South Korean citizens staged vociferous anti-Japanese street protests in major cities and outside the Japanese embassy in the centre of Seoul last week, burning the Japanese national flag and effigies of Tokyo leaders.

The barmy responses reflect many Koreans' bitter memories about Tokyo's brutal 35-year colonial rule over Korea that ended in 1945. Seoul and Tokyo normalised ties in 1965.

Japan has claimed the islands since 1905 when it signed an agreement with Korea that paved the way for colonisation, while Seoul officials said Korean claims to the island dated back to the year 512 and were well-documented.

Europeans likely to side-step rights at Asia summit in Bangkok

BANGKOK (R) — Asian countries have given the European Union (EU) a clear warning to forget sensitive human rights and labour issues at their first summit early next month and some Europeans look set to oblige.

The March 1-2 summit in Bangkok will concentrate on ways to strengthen trade and investment links between the two regions but it will also cover political matters including reform of the United Nations and nuclear disarmament.

Asian officials say they will not welcome the raising of "controversial and irrelevant" topics and will reject any attempt to link trade with rights or labour standards.

"People may bring up contentious issues, we will just tell them we don't want to discuss them, that there are other forums for discussing them," Malaysian Trade Minister Rafidah Aziz told reporters last week.

Attending the summit with the 15 EU members will be the seven members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — as well as China, Japan and South Korea.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas told a recent news conference that the Bangkok

summit should avoid "matters which are not relevant or controversial because if this happens the first historic meeting will be threatened with failure."

Some Europeans agree, saying trade and investment should be at the top of the agenda and controversy should be left out.

"The French agree (in) full with the view," French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette said in response to Mr. Alatas' warning.

President Jacques Chirac has since taking office sought to make France "more present in Asia" and is pushing French companies to build closer economic ties with the region.

Mr. Chirac wants the summit to stress the positive aspects of partnership and avoid issues bound to offend Asian nations, his aides said.

Diplomats in Paris told Reuters this may be partly because France hoped to avoid being the butt of Asian criticism over its recently concluded series of underground nuclear weapons tests in the South Pacific.

France has in the past raised the issue at every international forum. But how it will be done will be decided by the prime minister when he gets there," Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres' spokesman David Damiao told Reuters.

But French and other European officials said the first summit between the two regions should not be dominated by such issues.

"Obviously Denmark and other EU member states will want to bring up certain human rights issues but I am not certain that the Bangkok summit is a suitable forum for such topics," a Danish Foreign Ministry official told Reuters.

"Economic and trade questions between the EU and Asia will be uppermost on the agenda," said the official who declined to be identified.

The Asians are not going to get everything their own way, however. Portugal says it will raise the issue of East Timor, its former colony invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and annexed the following year.

There have been persistent allegations of human rights violations by Indonesian security forces ever since.

"Portugal always raises the issue at every international forum. But how it will be done will be decided by the prime minister when he gets there," Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres' spokesman David Damiao told Reuters.

Yeltsin faces busy first week of re-election bid

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin begins the first full week of his re-election campaign Monday with a meeting with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

He is due to address parliament Friday in his annual state of the nation speech.

Mr. Yeltsin, who said Thursday he would seek a second term in the June 16 election, may also meet International Monetary Fund (IMF) director Michel Camdessus, due in Moscow Wednesday for talks on a new \$9 billion loan to Russia.

The president faces simmering violence in Chechnya, however, with separatist rebels holding a food aid convoy Sunday while another group defied Russian forces around a Chechen village.

Mr. Kohl, Mr. Yeltsin's closest ally in the West, was due to arrive for a three-day visit late Sunday and to meet the Kremlin leader Monday.

ITAR-TASS news agency said the two men, meeting for the 14th

time, would discuss European security and bilateral ties in a "fire-side" meeting in Mr. Yeltsin's restored Kremlin residence.

Bonn aides say Mr. Kohl, also due to meet Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, aims to throw his weight behind political and economic reform in Russia.

Mr. Yeltsin, trailing in the polls behind Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, has repeatedly said he will press on with reforms.

But the removal of several leading liberals from the government and a number of populist spending pledges have raised question marks at home and abroad.

Mr. Zyuganov, who also announced his candidacy Thursday, told Interfax a single candidate of the left would win in June and denied that Communists would halt reform.

"How can we speak of reform when the country is slipping backwards at an unprecedented pace. The task is to stop this

collapse," he said.

Mr. Yeltsin, who said he must stand to stave off the threat of civil war, has a chance to lay out his vision in his state of the nation speech to both houses of parliament Friday.

The speech is to follow an extended government meeting Thursday at which the priorities for 1996 will be set out.

But in another swipe at Mr. Yeltsin, his former chief political aide attacked his recent sackings of a senior Russian television executive and other reformers.

Sergei Filatov, whom Mr. Yeltsin had named to help his re-election campaign, said the president risked driving away his own supporters.

"A negligent attitude to people could alienate from the head of state those who for many years have worked alongside him out of conviction," TASS quoted Mr. Filatov as saying.

Mr. Yeltsin last week sacked Oleg Poptsov, head of Russian State Television and Radio (RTR), accusing him of broadcasting lies.

The successful conclusion of talks with the IMF on the three-year loan under the fund's extended financing facility would be seen as an important signal to Western investors, whose money is vitally needed to help revive the economy.

Mr. Camdessus is coming to Moscow to complete talks on the loan, which includes a rigorous economic programme, and insists on meeting Mr. Yeltsin, a senior Russian central banker said last week.

Mr. Yeltsin, aware of growing public discontent over Chechnya, has pledged to end the 14-month-old war before the election.

About 50 Chechen gunmen seized a convoy of 18 food aid trucks Saturday near the village of Achkhoy-Martani 35 kilometres southwest of the regional capital Grozny and drove them into rebel-controlled mountains, TASS said.

Another group of up to 500 rebels was dug in around the village of Novogrozny in eastern Chechnya, it said.

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Reciprocity where it counts

AT A time when Israel is turning the heat on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to deliver on his promise to amend or delete the part of the PLO charter that calls for the destruction of the Jewish state, there is also an ongoing debate within the ruling Israeli Labour Party to reciprocate the anticipated Palestinian move with an equally important gesture. Labour Party Secretary-General Nissim Zivili has hinted recently that the political platform of his party for the next Knesset elections would be amended in two critical areas: First, the deletion of the clause incorporated in the 1991 Labour Party platform that opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank; second, changing the platform for the 1996 general elections to enable the uprooting of Jordan Valley Jewish settlements.

True, Zivili has backtracked a bit on these two propositions in the wake of a vehement outcry from not only the Likud and its leader Benjamin Netanyahu but also from within his own party. Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak rejected out of hand any talk about accepting the creation of a Palestinian state or the dismantling of Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley. "I think we should leave our platform the way it is," said Barak a few days ago. "There should be no additional state between Israel and the Jordan River," was one of the main principles of the Labour's 1991 platform and Barak and like-minded Labour leaders appear poised to insist on keeping it.

Irrespective of which shade of opinion within the Labour hierarchy would have the final say about these issues, the mere fact that there are some Israeli circles willing to entertain them is proof that the Palestinians can and should expect something concrete from the Israeli side in return for amending the PLO charter along the lines Israel insists on. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) deserves a quid pro quo in return for the Palestinian National Council (PNC) meeting to effect the required change. Fulfilling the ultimate Israeli dream of nullifying forever any Palestinian claim to any part of Israel which once was Palestine and the home of Palestinian Arabs deserves equal and proportional concessions from Israel. The dream of Palestinians for a homeland of their own must not be frustrated especially by the Labour Party which continues to profess a deep desire to have durable and just peace in the area. Falling short of satisfying Palestinian rights and aspirations would deal an eventual deathblow to the peace process in the Middle East. Before Israeli hardliners, whether from the Labour or Likud parties, decide to renounce new creative and constructive thoughts from within the ranks, they should think long and hard about the consequences of their short-sighted policies.

With this in mind, the PNC must be assured of a meaningful reciprocal reaction from Israel before it accepts to seal forever a commitment that binds all future Palestinian generations.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily strongly attacked U.S.-Israeli campaigns towards establishing a confederation between Palestine and Jordan as an attempt to prevent the Palestinians from establishing a state of their own on their national soil. Tareq Masarweh said that Ehud Barak, the Israeli foreign minister who has been behind the recent campaign, might have influence on and can give order to the Israeli army to move here and there but he can by no means impose a confederation on the Jordanians and the Palestinians. Neither can the United States force Jordan and Palestine to undertake a project which can by no means be implemented under the present circumstances, said the writer. The idea of confederation between the Palestinians, who have not yet secured their independence, and Jordan is viewed as a means of involving Jordan in an entity under Israel's domination and to preclude the creation of an independent Palestinian state, continued the writer. He said Jordanians can only raise their voice in condemnation of the U.S.-Israeli moves to subdue the will of the Arab people in this region.

THE INCLUSION in the new government of the president of the Bar Association, Kamaal Nasser, was described by a writer for Al Dustour Sunday as a clever move on the part of the Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti. Mohammad Subeishi said that the present government has inherited the policies of the previous Cabinet particularly with regard to maintaining the present policies towards Israel and the peace treaty, and it was necessary for the new prime minister to win the support of the professional associations which continue to oppose the treaty and normalisation of relations with the Jewish state. The writer said that by appointing Dr. Nasser as minister of administrative development, the prime minister has won over a key member of the Bar Association to the government's camp.

Human Rights File

The raison d'être of Kabariti's government

By Waleed M. Sa'di

THE SUDDEN change of gear in the country that was brought about by the resignation of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and the appointment of Abdul Karim Kabariti as the new prime minister was given many explanations at the national level that have yet to withstand the test of the times ahead.

The most immediate reaction to the designation of a new face to run the government culminated with the search for sensational or spectacular rationalisation focused on external factors or foreign policy issues.

The rumour mill was in full swing, prior to the dramatic change of government, about a deep division in the "establishment" on how to deal with the Iraqi situation. On the one hand, there were those high officials within the centre of power who recommended a more constrained approach to the Iraqi deteriorating condition that would leave many options open for the country. Some of the seasoned personalities behind this go-slow tactic counselled against putting all of the country's eggs in one basket and wanted to draw on past experiences when Amman was caught off guard vis-a-vis developments in the region.

The old adage "once bitten twice shy" would perhaps explain best the "conservative" stance of some of these highly placed politicians and their counsel for restraints on developments in Baghdad and related policy issues.

Diametrically opposed to this group of policy advisers were the people who believed that time was running out on half-backed policies and that time was over ripe for clarity of vision on regional issues.

The stakes for this latter group went beyond the reparation of relations with the Gulf states, especially Riyadh, which presumably called for a more coherent and clear posture by Jordan on several fronts, especially Iraq. The obsession with the Iraqi file before and after the change of government offered therefore the most probable explanation for the seemingly abrupt change; it was also on the mind of many local and regional analysts who looked for probable clues to the advent of the "white revolution."

In retrospect, though, the division within the country on Iraq was simmering for some time and the eventual tilting of the balance, one way or the other, was actually in the cards.

This is certainly one explanation for the resignation of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and like-minded supporters.

The other explanation could be more human rights related, as evidenced first of all by His Majesty King Hussein's call on the new prime minister to clean the Jordanian house and usher in a real white revolution.

I have a hunch that the King was angered by what Deputy Tawfiq Faisal had reported on widespread abuses of human rights in her now famous human rights report

that she submitted to the King after discovering that no one else in the government was listening or wanted to listen.

I also believe that the series of public and private interventions by former Prime Minister Taher Masri on serious violations of basic human rights convinced the Monarch that his previous governments did not take seriously enough his commitment to human rights.

Then came a series of effective measures undertaken by Prime Minister Kabariti to give deeper effect to the thoughts of the King. Take for example the immediate release of administrative detainees who were kept behind bars without trial or charge. There was a clear signal in this move that human rights abuses need to be reversed and what better way to start this corrective policy than by freeing people who have never been tried or convicted in a court of law.

In fact I wonder why we kept these people in jail in the first place. If the incriminating evidence against them is so overwhelming, the right course to take is to try them and convict them in due course.

Then came the talk about real and thorough reforms regarding the government's handling of the press, including the dramatic revelation by the energetic new Minister of Information Dr. Marwan Mouasher that all options will be pursued by the new government to "raise the level" of the freedom of the press, including the abolition of his ministry altogether.

The criminal prosecution of journalist Salameh Ne'mat for allegedly wrongful reporting must be a starting point for the promised reforms because under international norms persons accused of wrong or even malicious reporting can be sued in a civil court and not dragged to a criminal court unless the charge has to do with serious state security matters.

I doubt that it can be said that what Mr. Ne'mat was charged was compromising the state security interest.

There are other manifestations of the reality and depth of the white revolution that Mr. Kabariti is mandated to carry out which, in their cumulative sense, suggest that there is more to the rationale behind the change of government than the Iraqi file.

The immediate dialogue the government entered into with the Lawyers Association on how to turn a new page on their relations is a solid proof that the white revolution is more real than originally thought.

The policy measures already taken by the new minister of interior, Awad Khleifat, on citizenship and passport rights certainly offer strong support to the proposition that the new Cabinet is sincere about its declared policy course, especially on the local scene.

Mr. Khleifat has certainly shown that Jordan is capable of being faithful to its domestic and international legal commitments.

The new standards for university admission promised by the seasoned Minister of Education Munzer Masri leads also support to the thesis that the white revolution would not be only cosmetics.

It will be remembered that university enrollment has always been a very complex issue, fraught with claims of discrimination, that caused the discontent of many nationalists.

Of course we all have to wait and see if the momentum of the promised changes will be kept.

For starters, it is still dubious whether all of Mr. Kabariti's team are of like-minded people regarding the urgency of transformations needed in the country.

A fast glance at his Cabinet colleagues suggests that some of them are too traditional, pure and simple, to carry out the much talked about white revolution.

Many of us were expecting the injection of some high caliber academicians and contemporary thinkers into the bloodstream of government for the purpose of changing the colour of the country across the board.

The absence of much real new blood among the ranks of the new government has been exploited by some to cast doubt on the ultimate intents and purposes of the new team.

The prime minister himself and a very limited number of his ministers appear to be the only real new blood in the present government and many of us wonder if they alone can deliver us to the promised land.

True, the prime minister still holds important portfolios, including the Foreign Ministry and the Defence. It can be expected that these areas may be up for a major shakeup.

Against this backdrop with conflicting signals, perhaps the best way to explain the raison d'être of Mr. Kabariti's Cabinet is to look inward and outward.

It seems to me that Mr. Kabariti has a two-pronged policy: one is national and the other is foreign. In order to carry out the latter, the premier must deliver on his promised national reforms. Genuine local reforms would certainly strengthen the political base of the government and would enable it in turn to carry out a dramatic shift of policy on Iraq and elsewhere in the region. In other words, the success on the domestic front would assure a stronger chance to succeed on the international front. Time, of course, is of essence and unless the momentum on both fronts is maintained and their viability proved there will be more questioning about what the new government is really all about.

Buchanan web site blames Mossad for Clinton aide's death

By Thomas O'Dwyer

THE ANTI-DEFAMATION League has protested to presidential hopeful Pat Buchanan about "fantastical and highly offensive anti-Israel conspiracy mongering" in an article on the Buchanan campaign's official Internet site.

The article, in a series titled "Other news you might have missed," blames the Mossad for the

death of Vince Foster, a former close aide of President Bill Clinton. The article charges Hillary Clinton with being a Mossad agent.

Attention is being drawn to the article by another Internet site, the Jewish Communication Network (JCN), which is monitoring the U.S. presidential race from a Jewish perspective.

"This will only fuel the American Jewish community's distrust of

Buchanan," comments editor Larry Yudelson on the JCN site.

The JCN says that while Mr. Buchanan cannot be personally held responsible for the unsigned article, it is still on the official campaign site and reflects some of the attitude of people that ally themselves with Mr. Buchanan.

The article in question, posted to the site under the name "Media bypass," which is not further identified, says: "One of Vince Foster's several Swiss accounts was raided just before his death of \$2.73

million in proceeds from the sale of sensitive codes and other secrets to Israel's Mossad. Which may explain why the government is so anxious to portray Foster's death as a simple suicide. In reality, it could be the loose thread that unravels a massive tapestry of corruption."

"Beginning in late October, high-level CIA officials began sensitive one-on-one briefings with key members of Congress and those with intelligence committee assignments. No staff members are allowed. All parties are sworn to secrecy. Less

than a dozen lawmakers are involved."

"The subject, according to two sources: Espionage activities of Vincent Foster and his alleged partner — First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton — on behalf of Israel's Mossad and perhaps other foreign governments."

In a related item, "Media bypass" alleges the CIA has run a computer spying effort which has broken into the databases of more than 50 foreign intelligence agencies, including Mossad.

"It is how the CIA found

out Foster was working for the Mossad, after learning that someone in our government was delivering highly sensitive computer codes to the Israelis... Found along with Foster's name in the Mossad database was that of Hillary Clinton."

Computer owners can find the Buchanan campaign site by first connecting to the JCN site at <http://www.jcn18.com/election>, which contains links to the relevant material.

The Jerusalem Post

Mongolians at odds over election system

By Irja Halasz

Reuter

ULAN BATOR — Mongolia's president isn't pleased, the head of the ruling political party professes to embarrassment and the opposition is furious.

Only the ruling ex-Communists, who hold a majority in parliament, seem happy with their decision to approve a first-past-the-post election system in the face of pleas from opposition members for proportional representation.

President Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat, himself elected on an opposition ticket in a nationwide poll, has warned the parliament it is creating trouble for itself before the polls, expected in June.

The 76-seat great Hural, or parliament, passed last month the new election law that divides Mongolia into 76 constituencies, each with one representative elected through a simple majority.

The proposal was mooted, supported and voted on by the 70 members of parliament from the formerly Communist Mongolia Revolutionary Party.

The ruling party was not swayed by an angry walk-out by the six members from the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

"The Mongolia Revolutionary Party suggested the system and basically approved it by itself," Mr. Ochirbat said in a television interview last week.

"When doing it they did not properly consider the views of the president and of other parties," he said. "This can cause difficulties for democracy and is an issue to be cautious about."

The vote signalled the rejection of a compromise deal between leaders of the opposition and the Revolutionary Party for a mixed and more proportional election system — an agreement that the president had actively supported.

The compromise between the Revolutionary Party and the two main parties, NDP and SDP, had suggested a mixed system with 52 members to be elected directly from constituencies and 24 chosen by the parties based on the proportion of votes received.

That deal had been reached after opposition protests and a hunger strike in 1994 to back their demand for proportional representation.

The revised law says the boundaries of the 76 constituencies, which replace the previous 26, are to be defined 70 days before the elections. The elections are expected in June after the snows melt from this sprawling, sparsely-populated land of steppes.

Under the law, the candidate for each seat who receives the majority or at least 25 per cent of the vote will win.

In the previous elections in 1992, between two and four members were elected from each constituency under a complicated system also based on obtaining a majority of votes.

The opposition criticised the last elections as unfair.

LETTERS

The essence of women's existence

To the Editor:

AS A Jordanian woman, I was proud to hear His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan talk at Al Beit University (Feb. 14) about crimes of "honour" and to question whether these crimes are sanctioned by Islam. It is the first time I hear a condemnation of these crimes at an official level.

Aside from our educational attainment and the state's commitment to advance the instruction of women, I feel there is very little we, Jordanian women, can be proud of. In a patriarchal society such as ours, our own existence is not even cherished. How can we feel proud when, in many instances, the birth of a son is still favoured over the birth of a daughter; when families are much more eager to allocate more resources to the education of their sons than their daughters; when we need our husband's permission to obtain a passport; when we cannot withdraw funds from our own children's accounts, a right only granted the husband; when we are subjected to domestic violence and cannot be adequately protected by the law and we are told by society to "bear it" to protect the family's reputation; and when we are afraid to sleep in case that a brother or a father may think, in a frenzy, that we "defamed" their "honour" and kill us and when we, as mothers, cannot grant our children the right to citizenship or even residency.

Although as Jordanian women we try to be proud of the country's achievements in advancing women causes, on a daily basis we have to struggle with the reality of our existence.

What can a mother married to a non-Jordanian respond to her child who asks why she cannot be a Jordanian although she was born in Jordan, speaks Arabic, loves the country and the King, and her mother is Jordanian?

These children are deprived of the sense of belonging, cannot be registered in schools without residence permits, cannot enjoy the benefits of subsidy coupons, and do not have the most essential document in Jordan "the family register."

As a woman who has found limits in the confines of a patriarchal society and who is not seeing constructive

pressure and lobbying by women organisations to alter the reality of that society, I do not feel very proud. Prince Hassan's talk is definitely a great step in the right direction of making us partake in the sense of true citizenship to our nation.

Abla Amawi, Ph.D.,
Amman.

Bad habit encouraged

To the Editor:

A FEW weeks ago, I was astounded to read that the government had decided to reduce the price of a popular brand of cigarettes from 650 to 600 fils per packet. Knowing the deadly effect of smoking on its addicts (and those around them) it seems absolutely incredible in this day and age that any government would encourage its citizens to smoke more cigarettes!

Instead, it would be much more worthwhile to raise the tax on cigarettes. This will not only increase the annual revenue by a dramatic amount, (in England about a third of all government revenue is from the tax on tobacco and alcohol) it will also discourage those people who can least afford it (i.e. the poorer) to desist from this unhealthy habit.

In addition, by decreasing the number of patients suffering from all sorts of diseases caused by smoking (and the list is growing daily) a terrific saving in drugs, hospital beds and many other benefits would be realised.

At a time where awareness has become one of the priorities of many governments in the West, it is very strange to find that we still lag behind in this field.

Mustafa Tariq,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Beijing's Taiwan bluster more theatre than threat

By Jeffrey Parker
Reuters

BEIJING — China's bluster and massing of troops for war games near Taiwan are seen by few as harbingers of bloodshed, but rather as Peking opera on a geopolitical scale to cool Taiwan's ardour for go-it-alone democracy.

China has regarded Taiwan as a renegade province since 1949, when the Chinese nationalists, vanquished in a civil war, took refuge there and secured U.S. military protection.

Since mid-1995, as Taiwan's democracy has flourished, China has rattled Taiwanese nerves and Asian markets with near-daily reminders of its threat to use force to avert its independence.

Yet it is hard to find anyone — whether ordinary Chinese in the street, jittery Asian businessmen and investors or U.S. President Clinton and his military and political advisers — who believes Beijing will make good on that threat any time soon.

Even Taiwan president

Lee Teng-hui, the target of withering Chinese abuse, trekked to Kinnmen island a stone's throw from the mainland to get a close look at China's armed build-up.

That Kinnmen could host Lee at all shows dramatically how far the mainland Communists and Taiwan's nationalists have come since the 1950s, when China spent years shelling the island it calls Jimmen and nearby Matsu as the U.S. Seventh Fleet sailed the Taiwan Strait in defence of Taiwan's ruling nationalists.

Taiwan's Premier Lien Chan has said that recent tensions were temporary and — despite a heightened military alert — would ease once "misunderstandings" were cleared up.

If no attack is imminent, what does China hope to accomplish by mobilising 150,000 troops and extra warplanes along the south-eastern coast facing Taiwan?

Why hold a run of military exercises near Taiwan since mid-1995, including rounds of missile tests and live-fire amphibious land-

ings with Communist Party Chief Jiang Zemin at the helm, much of it later broadcast on Chinese state television?

Experts hope the bravado and bluster is just so much Peking opera, an ancient art heavy on threatening gestures and tension but which always leads to the same safe, predictable outcome.

They say China wants to use its military might — but not actually pull the trigger — to avert what it fears will be the ultimate outcome of Taiwan's emerging multiparty democracy: a progression from de facto independence to sovereignty.

Mr. Clinton's top China adviser, former Beijing Ambassador Winston Lord, has put Washington's view succinctly.

"While it is abundantly clear that (China) wishes its military activities to be noticed, to influence Taiwan's legislative and presidential elections, and to have a restraining effect on Taiwan's international activities, they do not in our judgement reflect an intention to take military action

against Taiwan," Mr. Lord said this month.

Taiwan and U.S. intelligence reports say more Chinese war games are imminent and likely to brush nearer to the island than ever, timed to precede Taiwan's March 23 presidential election.

Daily attacks in China's state-controlled media have scorned President Lee, favoured to win his first democratic mandate, as a "splitist" intent on Taiwan's independence despite paying lip service to Taiwan's unification with the mainland.

China has been careful, however, to target only Lee and other politicians rather than Taiwan's exuberant embrace of democracy. Despite the Communist Party's constitutionally enshrined rule, China purports to be a democracy.

While not confirming or denying its plans, Beijing has dismissed overseas concerns about its military exercises, saying they were a normal part of military training.

Bangladesh gives ruling BNP win but no respite

By Anis Ahmed
Reuters

DHAKA — A crushing win by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in Thursday's elections has given embattled Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia some relief from a long-running opposition campaign to topple her.

But a new opposition call for "non-cooperation" means more strikes and political violence — major impediments to Bangladesh's drive to reduce poverty and attract investment, political analysts said Sunday.

"The country is up for more unrest and the economy is poised to face more challenges," said Atiur Rahman of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

"Potential investors are already scared, holding back promises, and are likely to turn away," he told Reuters.

The BNP has gained an absolute majority with 167 seats from 300 at stake, with counting partially completed. Only one seat, won by an independent candidate, has so far eluded

the BNP's grasp.

Even though polling was incomplete or suspended in more than one-third of constituencies because of violence and alleged fraud, Ms. Khaleda is expected to form the next government soon after Eid al-Fitr Tuesday.

BNP leaders said the election saved Bangladesh from a constitutional crisis and helped Ms. Khaleda fulfil her pledge to protect the constitution and democracy.

"We have overcome the constitutional obligation, now we will have to overcome the political obligations," the BNP deputy leader Badruddoza Chowdhury told reporters.

An official estimate of the voter turnout in Thursday's polls was not available Sunday but independent observers said it would not be more than eight to 10 per cent. Analysts and diplomats have called the vote ridiculous.

Overseas donors were particularly unhappy about reports of widespread ballot box stuffing, they said.

"One of our Bangladeshi staff visited a polling centre several times Thursday and

saw very few people in the almost deserted centre," one Asian diplomat said.

"But when he went to vote himself, at the same centre, he saw ballot boxes full to the brim. This is ridiculous."

"I am just amazed to see how things are going in this very unpredictable country," said another diplomat.

Ms. Khaleda's opponents have dismissed the elections as "meaningless, one-sided and farcical." They have vowed to force Ms. Khaleda into another election soon.

All major opposition parties boycotted the poll because Ms. Khaleda refused to step aside for a neutral caretaker administration to supervise the vote.

They said Ms. Khaleda's government was corrupt and no election under it would be fair, which the prime minister has denied.

Sheikh Hasina, head of the main opposition Awami League, and her allies in the Jatiya Party and Jamaat-Islami plan a "non-cooperation movement" for three days from Feb. 24. The movement, which calls for the closure of schools, busi-

nesses and government, amounts to a strike.

They have also asked President Abdur Rahman Biswas to exercise his constitutional power and persuade Ms. Khaleda to call another election within 90 days from Feb. 15.

"The crisis Bangladesh is facing today can still be solved if Khaleda Zia quickly moves to hold a fully-participated election," said Mr. Rahman of Bids.

"Otherwise the country will have no credible government — that will impair development, economic progress and the fight against poverty."

The south Asian nation has frequently been paralysed by strikes and shutdowns since 1994 as the opposition relentlessly tried to force Ms. Khaleda to resign. The political disruption has cost Bangladesh's fragile economy dearly.

Thursday's vote was accompanied by widespread violence, in which at least 16 people were killed and 500 wounded. Voting officials were attacked, ballot papers stolen, and voting centres set ablaze.

S.African blacks plan to protest 'racist' school

By Ingeborg Lichtenberg
Reuters

POTGIETERSBURG, South Africa — Black South Africans in a right-wing town are threatening protests over black children barred from attending a local school with 600 white children.

A primary school in the northern town of Potgietersburg, 250 km north of Johannesburg, is the first where white attempts to preserve the status quo have been put to the test since all-race elections in 1994 ended 50 years of institutionalised racial segregation.

The school, controlled by white parents, is defying the provincial government dominated by President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and refusing to admit three black children.

This week, the northern province government took the matter to South Africa's supreme court to force the school to take in black pupils or face closure. Recently the Pretoria supreme court postponed the application.

Local ANC officials say police are supporting whites who have been guarding the gates of the school to prevent black parents from enrolling their children and vowed to stage mass protest action.

"We are planning mass action," said local ANC spokesman Nocks Seabi.

Mr. Seabi said the police supported

the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) last week when a group of white men barred three black children from entering the school and threw tear gas at a television crew.

"They've been protecting the white community... They are condoning their actions... They didn't arrest the people as expected, those people who were misbehaving," Mr. Seabi said.

Mr. Seabi said black students, teachers, parents and workers would participate in the protest march, due to take place in the town of 15,000 whites and 50,000 black residents on Wednesday morning.

"He said black workers would join the march because while whites in the town did not object to blacks working in their homes and businesses, they did not want their children to mix."

The march was only the first phase of the protest action, and Seabi said further action was being discussed with the taxi industry and businesses.

"If it comes to a push, then maybe a consumer boycott. We don't want to see that happening, but when we are pushed... We don't have any other alternative," he added.

"Our feeling is that the awb in Potgietersburg are doing this for the sake of maintaining their supremacy in the country. They are showing their racist attitude. They just want to undermine the government of the day to ensure that there's no democracy."

Afrikaners have cited education as the first battlefield in their struggle to preserve their culture in a black-dominated South Africa.

The parents, most of them Afrikaners and descendants of 17th century Dutch, French and German settlers, have denied accusations of racism, saying they had denied both black and white children access to the school because it was full.

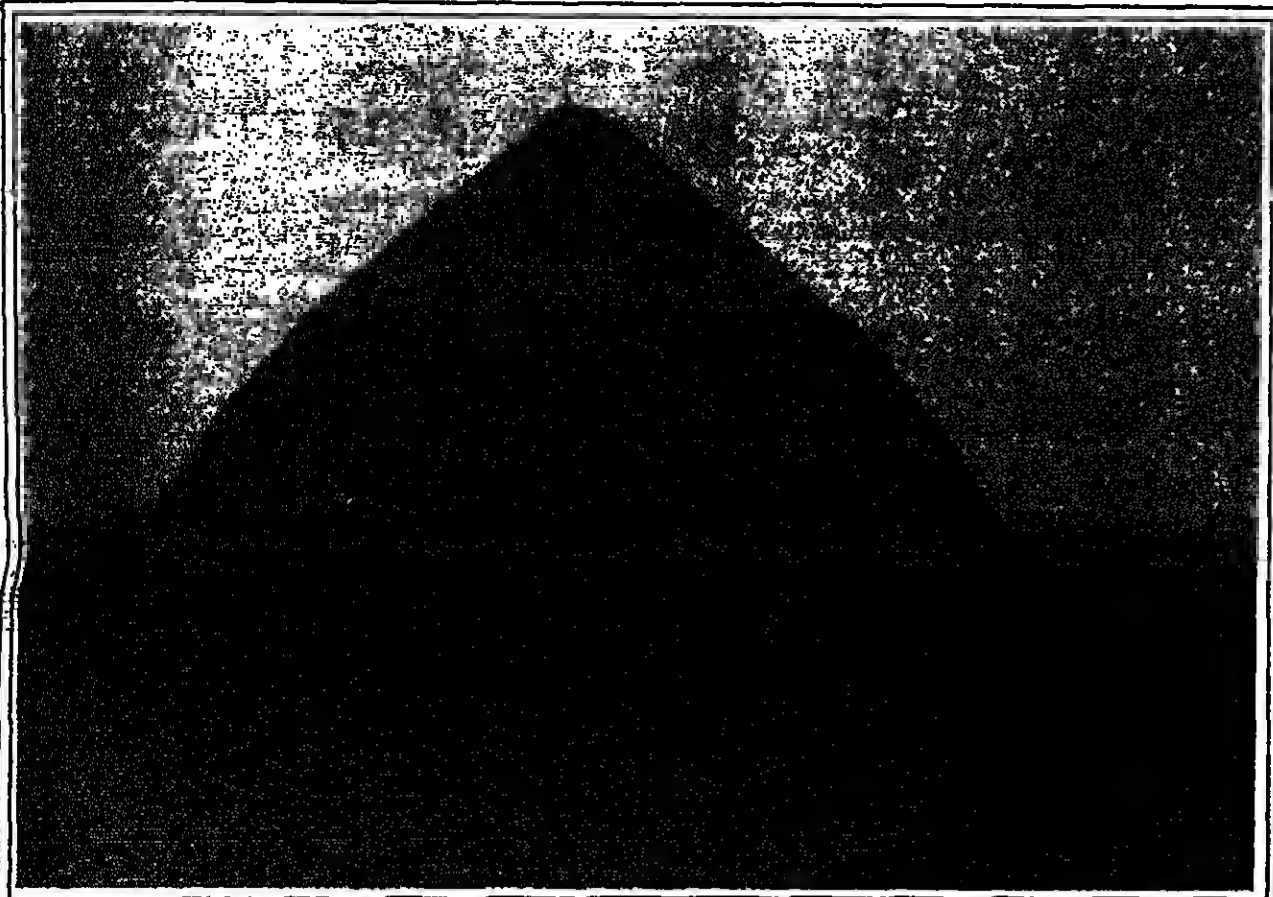
But Mr. Seabi said the school could still take 67 pupils and that some of its classrooms were empty.

"Therefore they are just playing mickie mouse when they are saying the reason is because their school is full. Because even during negotiations they were saying a different black school should be built and they don't want to see black pupils integrating, playing with their white pupils."

"So that's why we are convinced this is just a racist attitude."

Mr. Seabi said the teacher-pupil ratio in black township schools and villages around the town was one teacher for 70 children compared to the ratio of about one to 30 at white schools.

South African Education Minister Sibusiso Bengu said Monday that while the mother tongues of all communities would be protected and guaranteed, the government would not allow any community to discriminate against children on the basis of race.



An Egyptian man walks past the South Pyramid of Seneferu, also known as the bent pyramid. The 4500-year-old pyramid, and three others will be open for the public in June (Reuters photo)

Prison was the spur for Somaliland's Egal

By Peter Smerdon
Reuters

HARGEISA, Somalia — President Mohamed Ibrahim Egal of Somaliland says a dozen years in prison spurred him to help build the breakaway state he heads in the Horn of Africa.

The short, overweight leader of the self-declared republic has transformed the northwest into a relative model of good government compared with little central authority in the rest of Somalia.

"For almost three years, Somaliland has not only been left unrecognised by the international community but we are treated as if everything that we are doing here is a joke," says Mr. Egal.

"Recognition is very important. But we are not going to lie down and die. We are surviving despite that. We've done a great deal since 1993 and we are going to keep doing what we can."

Even critics who complain egal is headstrong and autocratic doubt that Somaliland could exist as a separate state without him. They concede he has no rivals to the presidency or political leadership of the dominant Isaq clan in the arid northwest.

"I was 40 years old when I was sent to prison in 1969 and I was 52 when I came out," he told Reuters in a recent interview at the presidential palace in the Somaliland capital Hargeisa.

"And it was a very profitable period for me. It gave me time to reflect, to reevaluate my life, to chart out a course and know myself, my shortcomings, what I can do and cannot do."

Aid officials credit him with heading a government that is working hard for law and order and Somaliland's 1.1 million people, half of them nomads. Diplomats have gained grudging respect for his tenacity and headlong crusade for recognition.

When the 66-year-old president speaks in Somali or English, peppered with expressions largely out of use since the 1940s, words tumble over one another, racing to catch up with him.

One of the main ambitions Mr. Egal gave up in detention was apparently hope for the presidency of Somalia, which he served as a minister since independence in 1960 and as premier from 1967 to 1969 until Mohamed Siad Barre seized power in a coup.

"I realised (in detention) we had no chance, Somaliland would have no chance while it was part of Somalia," says Mr. Egal, jailed by Mr. Barre with other government leaders without charge.

The president admits to being ashamed that he ignored British advice against the union and led "a stampede" of

northern politicians to Mogadishu at independence after serving as Somaliland's leader of government business for six months.

But he still has special contempt for Britain, which set up a protectorate over British Somaliland in 1886 as a source of livestock for its garrison at Aden and governed it until 1960.

Mr. Egal, a trader's only son educated at English schools, is incensed London refuses to recognise Somaliland and in his view by its silence discourages others from doing so.

"We had great hopes for the British but they did nothing... We are nothing to do with them, they are no friend of ours."

When angered, Mr. Egal sees plots and mysterious conspiracies in almost every major setback for Somaliland, and issues what at best can be described as colourful language, and issues what are largely empty threats which diplomats say only weaken his case.

Abdullahi Tur, his predecessor as president of Somaliland from 1991 to 1993, is "that vagabond who was here before me."

Mr. Tur's militiamen are a gang of "young chaps toting guns and technicals" — four-wheel-drive battlewagons — who live "in cloud cuckoo land" for thinking they can seize Hargeisa again after being forced out of the city in fierce battles in 1994.

"Egal gets an idea in his head and throws himself into it regardless," said a diplomat. "He is stubborn. But I must add that he is ready to back down before plunging over the brink."

Mr. Egal says international aid agencies are out to discredit his claim that he controls his own country and are sabotaging the economy by opposing his plan for an exchange rate for the Somaliland shilling at one-fifth of its international value.

"They (aid agencies) are trying to make a joke out of Somaliland. The impression created is that this is a banana republic with a tin pot dictator in it. I am not," he says.

"When they give the impression that what they are doing is the difference between life and death, this is not true. Whatever they do, if they leave today we will not miss it."

But he says the withdrawal earlier this year of Britain's save the children fund from Somaliland citing insecurity was a "bolt from the blue," as it had stayed on even when he fled abroad.

He admits the pullout was triggered by an attack on one of its women staff by what he calls "ruffians" in the southeast.

The president, chosen by clan elders in 1993, plans a referendum on a constitution and census before elections. But he adds that if they are impossible to organise within eight months, he will seek a new interim term from another clan conference.

Asked whether he ever plans to retire, Mr. Egal says that he will not let all his efforts for Somaliland go to waste and if he believes his achievements are endangered he will stay on.

Taiwan gets support for seat in U.N.

IN JANUARY 1996, Mr. Luis Alberto Monge, ex-President of Costa Rica, together with three other ex-presidents of Costa Rica (Mr. Mario Echandi, Mr. Jose Joaquin Trejos and Mr. Rafael Angel Calderon), wrote a letter to Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations, in support of the R.O.C.'s participation in the U.N. The letter was submitted to the U.N. Secretariat by the permanent representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations under the instructions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica.

Mr. Monge, a close friend of the Republic of China (R.O.C.), admires and praises Dr. Lee Teng-hui, President of the R.O.C. He has visited the R.O.C. six times, including in 1985, when he visited as President of Costa Rica. In October 1995, Mr. Monge was sent by Costa Rican President Jose Maria Figueres as special envoy to the R.O.C. on the occasion of the R.O.C. National Day. During his visit, Mr. Monge mentioned to President Lee the idea of coordinating with the three ex-presidents of Costa Rica to write a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Dr. Boutros-Ghali. Upon his return to Costa Rica, Mr. Monge followed up on this idea.

The five-page letter to Dr. Boutros-Ghali expresses the view that, because Costa Rica has a national tradi-

tion of safeguarding international justice and promoting world peace and the appeal of the R.O.C. to participate in the U.N. corresponds with this tradition, the government, Congress and people of Costa Rica firmly support the Republic of China's participation in the United Nations. This letter solicits all U.N. members to heed the R.O.C.'s appeal and to support fully the achievement of its goal, in order to realise the principles of peace, equity, justice and development enunciated in the U.N. Charter. The letter also highlighted five reasons why the R.O.C. should participate in the United Nations:

1. The Republic of China possesses all the required qualifications;
2. The R.O.C.'s participation in the U.N. will greatly benefit the welfare of the entire international community;
3. The R.O.C.'s participation in the U.N. accords with the U.N. Charter principles of equity and justice;
4. The support of the R.O.C. cause can strengthen the principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes and reduce tensions in the Asia-Pacific region; and,
5. This is the opportune time to review the wrong decision that has excluded the R.O.C. from the U.N.

Shbeilat wins JEA presidency

(Continued from page 1)

Rahman Bitar from the nationalist bloc who scored 2,399 votes.

The remaining seven seats were won by the Islamist white bloc. They went to: Mohammad Abu Afifeh (3,907 votes); Nassar Huneidi (3,173 votes); Mahmoud Tal (3,643 votes); Ahmad Kilani (3,310 votes); Mshari Abul Samir (3,383 votes); and Zubair Rabbia (2,654 votes).

Following the announcement of the results, Mr. Shbeilat's lawyer Lawad Yunis read a letter his client wrote from prison. Mr. Shbeilat reiterated his slogans of "no to Zionism and no for conspiracies on Iraq and no for IMF whose policies throw our men to the streets."

Mr. Shbeilat appealed to his fellow engineers to stand for their rights and said that when he was

arrested he knew that the professional associations, which have been at loggerheads with the government over the issue of normalisation of relations with Israel, had won the battle.

"The (former) government which held the banners of fighting the unions and public freedoms and attacking the press has disappeared... and another government declaring its intention to establish warm and good relations with civil society institutions has replaced it... congratulations for you on this vic-

tory," Mr. Shbeilat, who is detained in Jawideh prison, said in his letter.

Minister of Justice Abdal Karim Dughmi is said to have asked the new director of the Public Security Department, Lieutenant General Nasouh Mohieddin, to improve conditions of detention for Mr. Shbeilat, the weekly newspaper Al Majd said in its Sunday edition. The weekly said that the minister had also met with the three civil judges at the State Security Court where Mr. Shbeilat is being tried.

Arab trade fund in drive to attract more clients

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A fund created by Arab states four years ago to boost flagging trade among them has eased lending terms and subscribed to Internet in a drive to spur demand for its loans, officials said Sunday.

The Arab Trade Fund Programme (ATFP), set up in Abu Dhabi with a paid-up capital of \$500 million, said it was also making contacts with more member states to link them to its computerised network which distributes information to local producers on regional markets.

ATFP, based at the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), said it had just introduced a new facility that will make it easier for members to obtain loans.

"The new mechanism is the latest in a series of facilities intended to activate the fund's financing operations," ATFP said in a statement.

The new facility, which has been enforced, allows members to receive credits without the need to sign another agreement as loans will be available under a previous accord covering a specific period of time, the statement said.

Tunisia and Egypt have already benefited from such a facility, receiving credits

worth \$20 million each over the past two months. Negotiations are underway with other members for such credits.

The ATFP decided to ease lending terms as its activities have remained slack because of inter-Arab rifts, the existence of customs barriers and similarity in regional industries.

The fund has extended nearly \$450 million in credits, to finance local commercial transactions since it was launched in 1992. The figure is dwarfed by ATFP's financing capacity of \$1 billion a year.

Its operations cover only home-made products, except oil, with the aim of encouraging national productivity in order to expand industrial output.

Given the low demand for its loans, the fund has had little impact on inter-Arab trade, which has remained below 10 per cent of the total Arab trade of around \$250 billion per year.

"The fund has tackled one of the problems blocking trade among Arab countries. Other obstacles need to be removed, especially the high customs barriers and preference for foreign products," an ATFP official said.

The AMF, a regional IMF-

style institution which is encouraging reforms in the 22-member Arab League, has contributed half the ATFP's capital while the rest came from other Arab financial organisations and banks.

ATFP said it was continuing contacts with the remaining League members to link them to its data network, which would be completed in March.

The \$3 billion network, set up with the help of the United Nations Development Programme, has already started operation as it links several members. Its activities cover distribution of information on regional markets, supply and demand, and economic indicators from the linked members.

Officials said the network would also be expanded to provide information on global markets to help Arabs find more outlets for their exports.

"ATFP has become a subscriber to Internet, which is considered a window to the world. It has also organised seminars and will hold more such events in member states to acquaint them with its activities and encourage them to benefit from its resources," the ATFP statement said.

Clinton touts healthy economy as result of his policies

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton, who had great success using the economy as a prime issue in 1992, has sent Congress an election-year status report claiming an economic renaissance and warning against the political lure of "short-sighted solutions for long-term problems."

Mr. Clinton, who ran for the presidency bemoaning how bad things had gotten under 12 years of Republican rule, said economic conditions have picked up considerably over the past three years.

He said the nation was on the verge of hitting its target for creating nearly eight million jobs in his first term, the budget deficit has been cut nearly in half and the "misery index" that combines inflation and unemployment was at its lowest level in nearly three decades.

"Overall, the American economy is healthy and strong," Mr. Clinton declared in his annual economic report. "Our 1993 economic plan set the stage for this economic expansion and resurgence, by enacting historic deficit reduction while continuing to invest in technology and education."

Mr. Clinton used this year's document, wrapped in a gold cover to symbolise the 50th anniversary of the law that requires presidents to make annual economic status reports, to highlight his policies and castigate Republicans for efforts to dismantle programmes he said are necessary.

The report did concede that all was not rosy. More needs to be done to boost the country's lagging productivity and shrink the widening income gap between the richest and poorest in the country, the report said.

The report, certain to become the economic bible for

Mr. Clinton's reelection campaign, picked up on a number of Republican themes. Mr. Clinton declared that "the era of big, centralised, one-size-fits-all government is over."

The report, prepared by the president's three-member Council of Economic Advisers, took a swipe at one of the hottest ideas in the Republican presidential race — the flat tax.

One chapter in the book was devoted to a defence of the administration's trade policies, which have come under sharp attack from Republican candidates Patrick Buchanan, who has charged they have cost thousands of American jobs. Mr. Buchanan has called for scrapping the treaties with Mexico and a world trade agreement with 124 countries.

Asked about Mr. Buchanan's proposals, Joseph Stiglitz, chairman of the council, told reporters, "there is not a single reputable economist that would ascribe to those kinds of theories."

On the economy, the administration forecast growth will be slower this year, with the total output expanding at an annual rate of 2.2 per cent, down substantially from the 3.5 per cent increase during 1994.

Inflation will remain modest, with consumer prices expected to rise 3.1 per cent this year and the unemployment rate should average 5.7 per cent.

Mr. Stiglitz said a 2.2 per cent growth rate was respectable for an economic recovery that will be 60 months old in March, making the current recovery the third longest after lengthy expansions in the 1960s and 1980s.

Even with the expansion's advanced age, the economic report saw no reason for concern that a recession was imminent.

Economists: Japan interest rates unlikely to rise soon

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese interest rates were expected to remain low for some time to come, reflecting prolonged weakness of the economy, economists have said.

They said recent speculation, sparked by comments by Finance Minister Wataru Kubo, of an early interest rate rise was probably premature, but nonetheless begged the question as to when rates would be raised.

Mr. Kubo told parliament that current low interest rates were making it difficult for pensioners and others who rely on interest income.

His remarks prompted selling in some debt markets as investors began to focus on the timing of any move to tighten interest rates.

But Mr. Kubo later distanced himself from his comments, saying he had no say in the setting of rates.

"My status as finance minister does not allow me to make comments about interest rate policy," Mr. Kubo told reporters after a regular cabinet meeting.

The Bank of Japan's (BoJ) in September lowered its key discount rate to a record low 0.50 per cent.

Merrill Lynch analyst Marshall Gittler said: "The mar-

kets are obviously going to be nervous on this — the next move is up, but when?"

"Markets are moved by fear and greed. What we see here is fear," Mr. Gittler told AFX-Asia, and AFP-affiliated financial news wire.

J.P. Morgan economist Jesper Koll told AFX-Asia that Mr. Kubo's comments on interest rates may be good politics, but any change to current monetary policy settings was not expected.

"Interest rate policy is decided by the Bank of Japan and the ministry of finance," Mr. Koll said. "Both have made it very clear in recent reports and statements that low policy rates are vital to sustaining the current signs of improved recovery prospects."

Mr. Koll also said low interest rates were vital in ensuring that bank funding costs were kept close to zero, permitting them to rebuild their balance sheets.

In comments earlier this week, Bank of Japan Governor Yasuo Mutsushita said the central bank saw no change in monetary policy.

"BoJ's Mutsushita has said time after time that it will have to wait for a sustainable

recovery before changing policy," Mr. Gittler said.

"Right now, what is driving the economy is the September fiscal stimulus," he said of the government's 14.22 trillion yen (\$135 billion) package aimed at boosting the flagging economy.

"What the BoJ is worried about is when the effect of this package wears off, the economy will no longer be able to sustain recovery," Mr. Gittler said.

"So I don't think they can raise rates until the impact of the package fades — around mid-September. Until then, it will not consider raising rates," he added.

Analysts said concerns that growth may fade in the latter half of the financial year to March 1997 may put off any moves to tighten monetary policy.

C.S. First Boston economist Susumu Kato told AFX-Asia he saw year to March 1997 real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 1.8 per cent, with growth in the six months to September at around 2.5 per cent.

On that basis, in the second half of the year growth in GDP would be at best flat, or may even be negative, he said.

"Over the next six months, there is still a lot of public works in the pipeline but subsequently, there will be a significant decline," Mr. Kato said.

Mr. Kato said that by then monetary policy might no longer be stimulative, both in terms of rates and money supply.

"Can the private sector maintain growth? I am not sure it can," Mr. Kato said, adding: "Capital spending will continue to grow, but it will not be strong enough to maintain growth of the entire economy. Also consumer spending will remain weak as labour market adjustment continues."

Egypt expects agreement with IMF by early March

CAIRO (R) — The Egyptian government expects to reach an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the next round of talks, clearing the way for the Paris Club to write off loans to Egypt worth about \$4 billion.

Finance Minister Mohamed Ali Gharib said in an interview published Sunday that the debt waiver would save the country about \$200 million a year in interest payments.

"Agreement will finally be reached. During the next round of negotiations with the IMF mission, on waiving the last tranche of Paris Club debt," he told the government newspaper Al-Ahram.

The IMF office in Cairo said no firm date had been set for the talks but Egyptian officials have said they expect them to take place in late February or early March.

The talks were originally due to start in January but both sides agreed to put them off until the new Egyptian government, which took office in early January, has

found its feet.

The government has embarked on a crash programme of economic change, making up for some of the time lost in the last year under outgoing Prime Minister Atef Sedki.

It has already removed some of the deterrents to investment, introduced new incentives, cut the customs duty on some capital goods and reformed the housing law.

Draft laws standardise investment legislation and to liberalise the banking sector are on their way to parliament.

Mr. Gharib said he met a senior IMF official at the World Economic Forum in Davos and was told that the fund was happy with the reforms the Egyptian government has carried out.

After the last formal talks in Washington in October, the IMF agreed to take a devaluation of the Egyptian pound off the agenda, making an agreement substantially easier.

"The fund completely

ruled out a devaluation. They are convinced there's no justification for that now," Mr. Gharib said.

Egypt does not need money from the fund, only a clean bill of health to persuade its creditors to carry out the last stage of a 1991 agreement to waive half Egypt's official debt. The Paris Club has already written off loans worth \$6 billion.

Mr. Gharib said that the government would try to keep its budget deficit, one of the key indicators for the IMF, at 1.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the financial year 1996/7 starting in July, about the same as in the current year.

"We are trying... to keep this figure stable. We don't want the ratio to increase and at the same time we are not trying to decrease it," he said.

It would do this by continuing to leave many big investments to the private sector but without increasing the level of taxes. Instead it would launch a campaign against tax evasion.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

Syria to circulate new 25-pound coin

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria will introduce 25-pound coins next week and gradually withdraw bank notes of the same value from circulation, official sources have said.

The new coins would be worth 50 U.S. cents on the black market, or 60 cents at the official exchange rate.

The measure is part of a plan to convert smaller bank notes to coins, the sources said.

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrillon

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ADYLL

MOVEN

KEDONY

THEMEL

Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: GLORY FORCE DEADLY HEARTH
Answer: What the electrical storm gave them — A CHARGE

THE Daily Crossword by Dorothy B. Martin

ACROSS

- Snack
- Means of mass communication
- Groto
- Tennis name
- Pull forth
- Under the covers
- Remain
- Strewing
- Island
- Cake decorator
- Unkempt
- Football pass
- Matched collections
- Israeli airline
- Emphasized
- Canary's kin
- City of Light
- Big name in China
- "Is — in the world beyond...?" (Montaigne)
- Cinema
- Flower holder
- Cooling device
- Fabulist
- Woodland god
- Locomotive operator
- Force
- Earns after expenses
- Lurches
- Chasm
- Diminish
- Nonsense!
- Splashing
- Excavation
- Porter
- French river
- In the past
- Uriah —
- Old weapon
- Old

DOWN

- Twangy
- Ancient Italian city
- Destructive
- Attention-getter
- Mexican liquor
- Outshine
- Cherished
- NYC subway
- Lawyer; abbr.
- Gentle touch
- "—s Irish Rose"
- Sell
- Restless
- Park, Colo.
- Persian Gulf nation
- Nobelist Wiesel
- Denude
- Indian tribe
- Taste with enjoyment
- Superficial knowledge
- Effortless
- Activist
- Secure
- Ardor
- Models
- Encounter
- Weathercock
- "— of robins..."
- Father
- Part of the foot
- Hazard
- Tropical plant
- Present
- Horse
- Author Sholem
- Fraternal org.
- Ivy League college
- Telegram
- German spa
- Knock
- Extinct bird

Puzzle solver:

MARBLE SLID

SATURATE ATONAL

PROMOTED OTIOTOT

RIM SHRINER MAY

ANIL ENTER CUBA

TACIT ASI MEDAL

COAL LIONESS

OVERT NOTRE

PRINTER PARA

RINSE OAR EVERT

OGEE HAREM ONER

BIG BOREDOM DDE

ENAMEL NICETIES

RARITY ACHIEVES

LYLE YANDER

Peanuts

YOU SHOOT, AND I'LL GO UP FOR THE REBOUND..

BONK!

THAT WAS THE REBOUND..

Andy Capp

LOVELY LITTLE FOOTBALLER THAT SON OF YOURS, DEAR.

HE'S THE TRICKIEST LAD ON TWO FEET FLO — IF THAT MAN OF YOURS WOULD ONLY LET HIM STAY ON 'EM.

Mutt'n'Jeff

MY SON! PICKIN' UP CIGAR BUTTS OFF THE STREET. SHAME!

NIX, POP. IT'S ALL RIGHT! IT'S ONE OF YOURS!

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Early this morning give priority matters your attention and try to find methods for self-improvement. Be sociable this evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your intuitions are good today and should be followed if you are to gain personal goals easily in order to be successful.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Get into public or worldly matters which attend you and handle them most efficiently. Have fun with your close friends.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Study which of the new interests you have considered of late which you feel will be best to take on at the time and you will find prosperity.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Study your practical affairs well and now how to make them work out better in the days ahead so you can be successful in the eyes of higher-ups.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You like to do everything precisely and it is possible at this time if you gain the cooperation of allies you can achieve your desires.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Study your surroundings and see how to make them more charming and comfortable. You understand a fellow associate better at this time.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Forge dull duties and get together with congenial friends at activities which are enjoyable. Make sure you don't over-spend today.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Be sure to handle your loved ones with kid gloves so that more harmony can reign at home. Be more cooperative with those under your roof.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is the fine day for communicating and handling correspondence which has been accumulating. Drive very carefully while on the highway.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Any ideas you have to gain a greater abundance which you need should be discussed with an expert for his or her opinion.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a day today to decide what is best for you to do later in the evening to better your position in life so you can be more successful.

Business & Finance

Shopping malls bring bargain bonanza to Arab Gulf states

DUBAI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states have embraced consumerism with open arms, flocking to American-style shopping malls where traders are trying to tempt them with increasingly over-the-top offers.

Buy a pot of honey and win a dromedary. Win a calf with a kilogramme of meat, or a Rolls Royce with a new washing machine.

The offers scream of shoppers from shops and stalls as traders large and small fight to attract an increasingly discerning clientele.

The six Arab Gulf states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman have a total of more than 250 commercial centres for a population of just 23 million of which some nine million are expatriates.

Apart from havens of unlimited shopping, they provide an air-conditioned oasis and escape from the hot, sultry climate outside.

The City Centre in Dubai is one of the latest malls to tower over the shopping scene. The 100,000 square

metre building, which has parking spaces for 3,000 cars, houses 200 shops and a leisure complex.

Dubai has about 20 such malls for its 674,000 residents which in a desperate bid to lure customers organise opulent sales and lotteries.

On Thursday, Dubai launched its biggest ever "shop-till-you-drop" bonanza with a 43-day festival in which 2,000 traders are promising discounts from 20 to 70 per cent on a variety of products.

A kilogramme of 24-carat gold worth \$13,000 is up for grabs in a daily tombola at the fair, which the UAE is hoping will attract 1.5 million visitors.

The number of commercial centres is proportionally nine times higher per capita than in Europe," said Morhef Mohammad Ryadh Kishi, the manager of the Hammarain, a centre with 85 shops and a five-star hotel.

"These centres reflect the economic and civilisational rise of the emirate," added Abdul Aziz Al Ghurir, who manages the centre of the same name which cost \$136 million to build — 15 years ago.

Even Saudi Arabia, where Islamic law or sharia is strictly enforced, has not been spared from sales-fever or lotteries.

In Riyadh, with its 3.2 million residents, places abound offering customers the chance to win a Rolls or a Mercedes by buying a ticket for \$1,300.

Winners are posted outside the shops or advertised in the newspapers, while the prizes are put on display in shop entrances or in the corridors of the malls.

One carpet trader even posted the announcement to the back of a dromedary outside his shop, one of the most popular prizes to be put up for offer in the Gulf monarchy where it commands a legendary respect.

U.S. investors hold \$87.8b in Asian equity

SINGAPORE (AFP) — U.S. institutional investors held equity investments worth \$87.8 billion in key markets of the Asia-Pacific region at the end of September last year, according to a report.

The figure represented a 30.4 per cent rise from a year ago.

The increase was in line with a 23.5 per cent rise in global U.S. investments through the first three quarters of the year, the U.S. research firm Technometrics said in a report quoted by The Straits Times here.

Japan was the top Asia-Pacific market for American investments, accounting for \$41.7 billion, followed by Hong Kong (\$12.1 billion), Australia (\$11.2 billion), South Korea (\$4.5 billion) and Malaysia (\$4.4 billion).

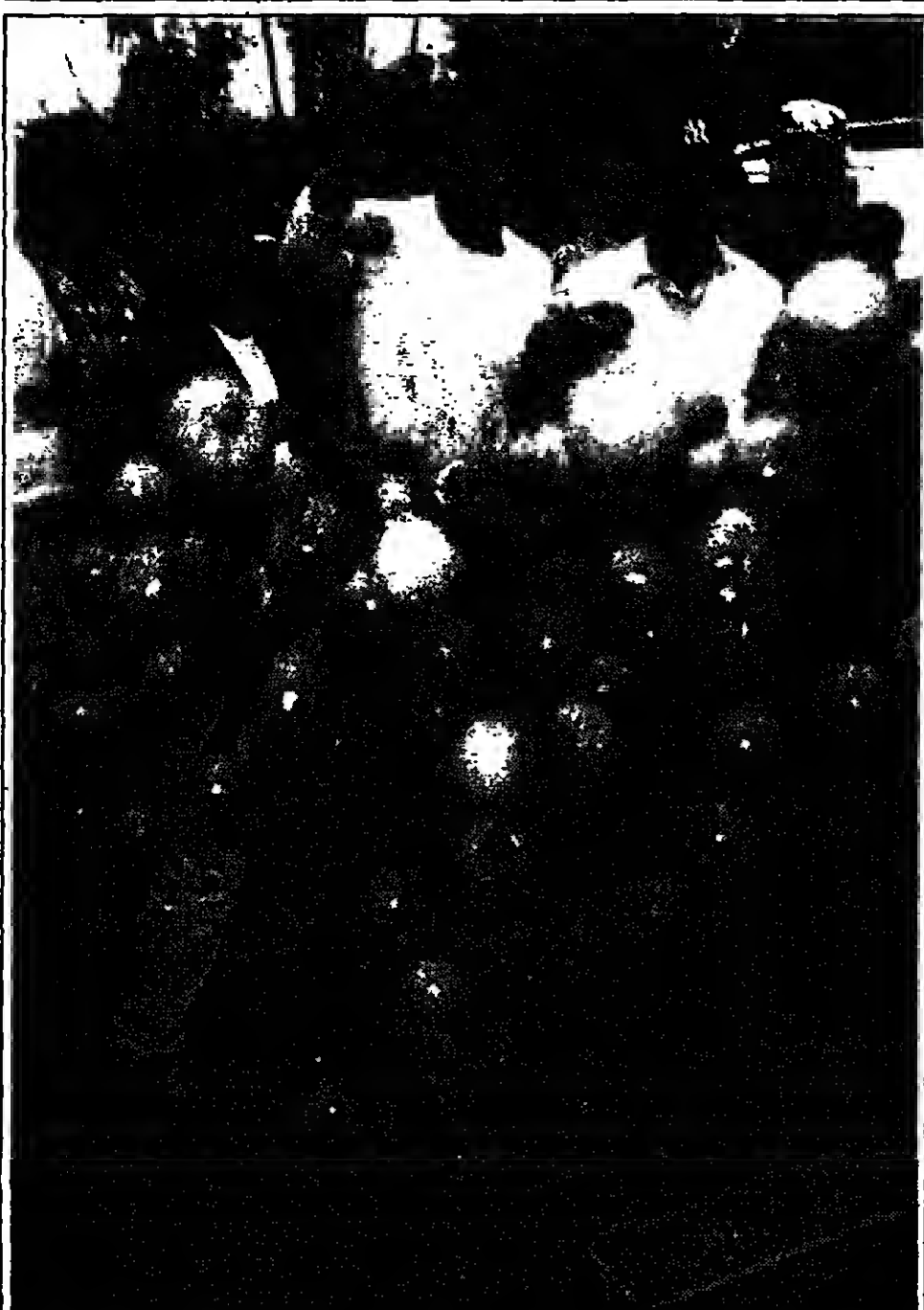
Singapore was at sixth place among recipients with \$3.5 billion, and the city-state was followed by Thailand, New Zealand and the Philip-

pines each of which accounted for \$2.4 billion, Technometrics said.

Indonesia received \$2.1 billion in U.S. portfolio flows, China \$700 million and Taiwan \$400 million.

The Asia-Pacific share of worldwide U.S. investments reached 25.3 per cent, Technometrics said. Europe cornered the lion's share of \$3.8 per cent of American funds poured for international markets.

ASIAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK INDEX: 10000				
TELEPHONE: 60717 / 60718				
ORIENTED MARKET INDEX PRICE LIST FOR FEBRUARY 18/02/1996				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CHG
JORDAN BANK	200	44700	223.500	233.500
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL BANK	200	2180	10.900	11.900
CALSO BANK	5000	2180	4.360	4.360
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	2000	2020	2.020	2.020
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	1300	1300	1.000	1.000
THE HOUSING BANK	980	4440	4.520	4.520
JORDAN GULF BANK	3400	3478	1.020	1.020
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	1000	3453	3.453	3.453
BEST ISLAMIC INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	780	2372	3.040	3.040
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	17800	12388	0.700	0.700
TECHNOMETRICS INVESTMENT BANK	2450	3109	1.270	1.270
INDEX SECTION				
AMMAN INDEX	34327	111165	JORDAN INDEX: 100.00	CHG: +0.145
INSURANCE SECTION				
AMMAN INSURANCE	20700	24185	1.160	1.160
INSURANCE SECTION	20700	24195	JORDAN INDEX: 129.18	CHG: +0.107
SERVICES SECTION				
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	5950	10343	1.740	1.740
AMMAN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY	800	837	1.046	1.046
AMMAN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY	100	544	5.440	5.440
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	880	1002	1.120	1.120
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	250	258	1.032	1.032
JORDAN INVESTMENT TRADING CENTER	200	101	1.010	1.010
AMMAN INVESTMENT & BROKERAGE	200	494	2.470	2.470
AMMAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1500	1725	1.150	1.150
AMMAN UNIV. FOR COMMERCIAL & LAND TRADES	2800	8410	3.000	3.000
INDUSTRIAL SECTION				
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORY	21814	79848	3.660	3.660
JORDAN CEMENT FACTORY	1100	3520	3.200	3.200
THE AMMAN POTASH	1000	8700	8.700	8.700
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	1200	7450	6.166	6.166
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	10460	23804	2.260	2.260
JORDAN POTASH DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1300	9173	7.050	7.050
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	7800	4187	0.530	0.530
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	780	353	0.450	0.450
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	2470	2399	0.970	0.970
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	200	274	1.370	1.370
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	2000	2930	1.465	1.465
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	288	908	3.150	3.150
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	1000	1445	1.445	1.445
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	288	2474	8.590	8.590
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	2880	3884	1.350	1.350
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	8900	13920	1.560	1.560
AMMAN POTASH MANUFACTURING	300	408	1.360	1.360
GRAND TOTAL				
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET	137122	174079	JORDAN INDEX: 123.56	CHG: +0.432
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET	230458	340291	JORDAN INDEX: 154.78	CHG: +0.092



Tomatoes fly as Israeli farmers block the road during a demonstration against the sale of tonnes of cheap Palestinian produce which are forcing the Israelis to sell below cost or destroy their produce (Reuters photo)

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Analysis shows apartments accounting for 55.8 per cent of houses in Jordan

AN ANALYSIS conducted by the Housing Bank on the results of the 1994 national census shows that the number of houses in the Kingdom increased from 313,193 in 1979 to 835,604 in 1994. The increase represents an annual average growth rate of 6.5 per cent, more than the average five per cent increase in the number of families per year. According to the results of the census, the number of apartments increased between 1979 and 1994 by 9.1 per cent per year, to reach 466,513 apartments in 1994. The number of small individual houses is 333,576, representing 39.9 per cent of the total number of houses in the Kingdom, whereas the apartments represent 55.8 per cent. Large individual houses (or villas) represent 1.4 per cent and other types of housing, such as shanties, tents and work places used as dwellings, account for 2.9 per cent of the overall number of houses. The data obtained indicates that the growth in the number of houses between 1979 and 1994 was basically due to the expansion in the construction of buildings and apartments, which accounted for 21 per cent of the increase. The rate of inhabited houses in 1994 was 80.4 per cent, down from 83 per cent in 1979. The percentage of empty apartments accounted for 55.1 per cent of all uninhabited houses, mainly because of the large number of buildings and apartments built during that period. The highest percentage of occupancy is 83.1 per cent in the Zarqa Governorate, while the lowest is 76.2 per cent in the Ma'in Governorate. In the capital, the rate of occupancy is 80.2 per cent.

Further details indicate that 62.5 per cent of the houses were family-owned or owned by a member of a family, whereas 27.7 of the houses were rented unfurnished. Other houses, which accounted for 9.8 per cent, were either rented furnished in exchange for employment or owned by a relative among other different kinds of house ownership. The 1979 census showed family-owned or houses owned by a member of a family accounted for 65.6 per cent of house ownership.

Of the family-owned or houses owned by a family member, 7.6 per cent were paying housing loan instalments. The largest creditor was the Housing Bank as it was holding 31 per cent of the houses which were still subject to housing loan repayment. The share for other banks was 23.4 per cent, while those who paid instalments to the Housing Corporation accounted for 10.2 per cent.

The average number of people per room, or the percentage of crowdedness, was calculated at 1.4 persons, with the highest percentage of 1.7 persons in Ma'an and the lowest of 1.3 persons in Amman, Balqa and Karak. The percentage of houses supplied with water from the general network was 93 per cent, and 41.5 per cent of the houses were connected to the sewage system, compared to a percentage of 12 per cent in 1979 (Al Aswaq).

Financial Markets

In co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (February 12-February 16, 1996)

AMMAN — The U.S. unit depreciated noticeably against other major currencies last week. It ended the week 1.73 per cent lower against the yen, 1.48 per cent lower against the mark, and 1.42 per cent lower against sterling.

The dollar was reported to have depreciated at the beginning of Monday trading hours, but managed to rise later that day, influenced by the rise of U.S. stocks and bonds. In the meantime, a Bundesbank council member indicated that the Bundesbank still has scope to consider lowering German interest rate further, but this, he added, would not help solve the weakness of the German economy.

The U.S. unit retreated against other major currencies Tuesday. The dollar's decline came on the back of the mark's rise against a number of European currencies, especially the Italian lira. Reports indicated that the mark rallied against the Italian lira on pessimism over the formation of a new coalition government in Rome. The focus on the difficulties of achieving a united European currency also supported the mark against the dollar.

The dollar continued its depreciation against other major currencies Wednesday, as the mark continued to rise against other European currencies. Diminished hopes of the possibility of forming a new coalition government in Rome and increased prospects of holding general elections in Italy in early April, pressured the Italian lira against the mark.

The U.S. unit appreciated against the mark and sterling Thursday, but continued its depreciation against the yen. The dollar's rise was attributed to traders' reaction to the release of new U.S. economic data. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia announced that its index of business activity in the manufacturing sector showed a rise of 3.8 per cent in February, compared to a decline of 16.6 per cent in January.

The dollar witnessed major losses against the mark and sterling at the end of the week, while depreciating modestly against the yen. The dollar came under pressure, influenced by a continued surge of the mark against the Italian Lira and a slide in U.S. stocks and bonds.

The U.S. unit, thus, ended the week at 1.4545 marks, 185.18 yen and at \$1.5523 to the pound.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	Today Feb. 16, 1996	Friday Feb. 16, 1996	Percent Change
Sterling Pound*	1.5706	1.5523	1.42 %
Deutsche Mark	1.4760	1.4545	1.48 %
Swiss Franc	1.2065	1.1845	1.86 %
French Franc	5.0747	5.0065	1.36 %
Japanese Yen	107.00	105.18	1.73 %

* 100 per 1000

Euro-Currency Interest Rates*		Feb. 16, 1996	Feb. 16, 1996
Currency	1 Month (%)	1 Year (%)	1 Month (%)
U.S. Dollar	5.18	4.90	5.18
Sterling Pound	6.28	6.00	6.28
Deutsche Mark	3.26	3.12	3.31
Swiss Franc	1.53	1.95	1.46
French Franc	4.16	4.35	4.38
Japanese Yen	0.33	0.58	0.38

* 100 per 1000

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin		Date:	1 February 18, 1996
Currency	Bid	Offer	
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100	
Sterling Pound	1.0980	1.1035	
Deutsche Mark	0.4863	0.4897	
Swiss Franc	0.5971	0.6001	
French Franc	0.1413	0.1420	
Japanese Yen*	0.6724	0.6758	
Dutch Guilder	0.4342	0.4364	
Swedish Krona			

* Per 100

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Orthodoxi dethrone Ahli 92-75 to win First Division trophy

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Orthodoxi Saturday won the Kingdom's First Division basketball title after scoring a convincing 92-75 win over titleholders Al Ahli in a match attended by over 4000 fans at the Sport Palace.

Al Orthodoxi's win enabled them to reclaim the title which they last won in 1991. The match brought back memories of the era in which Al Orthodoxi dominated the basketball scene winning the trophy from 1976-1989.

While Al Ahli had the psychological edge going into the match after winning their first round encounter 90-76, Al Ahli's players undoubtedly played one of their worst matches in years. The fact that they had lost their first round match against Al Jazireh made them finish with two defeats while Al Orthodoxi lost only once.

In Saturday night's match Al Ahli's shots seemed inaccurate but the team's worst department was rebounding — under both boards.

On the other hand, Al Orthodoxi dominated in that aspect and had a very tight and effective defence. Moreover, and unlike their opponents, almost all players who joined the action were quite successful.

Contrary to their officials' statement before and during the competition, Al Ahli were not in the championship form that allowed them to clinch the title in 1990 before winning it again in the last three years 92, 93, 94. (The just-concluded championship was for the 1995 season).

Al Ahli lost 76-73 to Al Jazireh in the first round and only managed a 77-73 win in the second round. Meanwhile, Al Orthodoxi's only loss was to Al Ahli in the first round and had a difficult time against Al Jazireh in both rounds before winning 72-66 and 85-75.

Al Orthodoxi's triumph was crucial for coach Murad Barakat whose team had failed his expectations in earlier years.

The team, now led by his younger brother Hilal (the match's top scorer with 28 points), proved they were on the road to recovery as they set the pace and totally controlled the match against their more experienced opponents.

Al Orthodoxi led from the beginning as the scoreboard showed an 18-13 lead after two consecutive three-pointers by Barakat.

Al Orthodoxi got a further boost when Muntasser Ahluta'yeh joined the action midway through the half and scored nine out of the next 16 points to take his team's lead to 35-25 with five minutes remaining.

Al Ahli on the other hand were struggling for the right lineup throughout the first half. With usual top scorer Marwan Ma'touq closely guarded and key centres Ramez Hamoudeh and Marwan Saedi totally ineffective and unable to score the burden of scoring was on Yousef Zaghoul and Riyadh Ayesh.

Al Orthodoxi held on to their lead and ended the first half 47-36.

If Al Ahli's fans thought their team would now reverse things in the second half, that never happened. Rather Al Orthodoxi had an explosive start and scored by Barakat, and Ashraf Samara to take a 61-43 lead.



Al Orthodoxi's captain Hilal Barakat receives Youth Mohammad Daoudieh (photo by Abdullah Ayyoub)



Al Orthodoxi's players celebrate their win with thousands of fans at the Sports Palace (photo by Abdullah Ayyoub)



Al Jazireh's Husam Lutfi receives one of three "Best Player" awards following the final match (photo by Abdullah Ayyoub)

The match's scorers were:

Al Orthodoxi: Hilal Barakat 28, Muntasser Ahluta'yeh 19, Mahmoud Sha'han 9, Jan Sahlieh 9, Fadi Saqqa 7, Ziyad Nahulsi 6, Ashraf Samara 5, Naser Bassam 5, Raed Alhaj 4.

Al Ahli: Riyadh Ayesh 18, Yousef Zaghoul 16, Marwan Ma'touq 14, Ramez Hamoudeh 12, Marwan Saedi 8, Faisal Nsour 4, Wisam Nino 3.

JBF awards best players following the match:

Orthodoxi: Hilal Barakat

Ahli: Husam Lutfi — Jazireh.

FINAL STANDINGS

	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Orthodoxi	7	1	764	523	15
Ahli	6	2	675	534	14
Jazireh	5	3	626	498	13
Jalil	2	6	417	570	10
Watani	—	8	460	817	8

Officials to begin testing boxers for HIV

NEW YORK (AP) — Tommy Morrison's positive test for the AIDS virus proved to be a source of enlightenment for New York state's top boxing official.

Floyd Patterson, the first two-time heavyweight champion and now chairman of the New York State Athletic Commission, said the state would begin testing boxers for the AIDS virus as a result of the Morrison case.

Asked why the state waited until now to institute testing, Patterson, in a starting comment on a disease first identified more than a decade ago, said: "AIDS just came out. I go back to the '50s. I fought for 23 years. There was no AIDS. I just heard of AIDS a

few weeks ago."

Patterson, chairman of the boxing commission since last summer, was appointed to a full term last week by the state legislature. He said pre-fight testing would begin as soon as possible.

"There was no proof before," Patterson said. "Now you have proof."

The only other states that screen boxers for HIV are Nevada, where Morrison was tested, Arizona, Oregon and Washington.

Promoter Don King said that until states institute mandatory testing, he will require fighters on all his future cards to be tested and will pay for the tests himself.

"We've all been trauma-

tized by what happened to Tommy Morrison," King said in a statement. "But this is something everyone in our society has to face. We have to find ways to come up with a cure for this terrible disease. That may be far into the future, but we must keep striving to that goal."

King said the HIV testing for his promotions will begin with the Feb. 24 card in Richmond, Virginia, featuring Terry Norris and Vincent Pettway for the WBC and IBF junior middleweight titles.

In New Jersey, legislation was expected to be introduced Thursday by assemblyman Neil Cohen and State Sen. Richard Codey requiring mandatory testing.

"I would love to announce within a week or so that New Jersey is testing," said Larry Hazzard, chairman of that state's commission.

Patterson said he was advised that legislation is not required in New York to introduce AIDS testing for boxers. He said he acted unilaterally.

"I'm the chairman," he said. "I want to save boxers. We have the ability to do medical testing. It doesn't require an act."

Patterson said the tests would be part of regular pre-fight physical examinations.

Patterson said he expected no objection to the testing procedure.

Picabo Street wins gold in downhill

SIERRA NEVADA, Spain (AP) — American Picabo Street won the women's downhill Sunday in the championships and teammate Hilary Lindh took bronze in a race that saw North Americans take four of the first five places.

The 24-year-old Street, skiing's new female superstar to go with Italian slalom ace Alberto Tomba, got revenge in the race against Germany's Katja Seizinger, who finished second. Seizinger took gold to Street's silver in the '94 Olympics.

Street, the defending World Cup downhill champion and leading the standings again this year, covered the 3,396-metre (11,141-foot) Veleta course in 1 minute 54.06 seconds and confirmed herself as the discipline's top woman and the first American woman to win a world downhill gold.

The unusually long, relatively flat run for women was in near perfect condition, much faster than Saturday when bright sun slowed the track for the men's downhill.

"I attacked the course the whole way down," said Street, who broke into tears after Italy's Isolde Kostner — starting five spots behind her and the last threat to beat her — finished a full second behind.

"I feel like crying I'm so happy," added Street, whose unusual first name means "clear water" in an American Indian language. "It was really a big challenge for me today to come into the race being the favorite and then to overcome all the pressure and to ski well under it."

"Another thing that really brings me a lot of joy... is the fact that Hilary and Megan were fifth. I think it's an unbelievable day for the USA... having the stimulation of world championships after being two months in Europe in just what we needed."

Seizinger finished in 1:54:63 and Lindh was third in 1:54:70. The 26-year-old Lindh of Juneau, Alaska, took silver in the '92 Olympic downhill.

Defending champion Kate Pace Lindsay of Canada, skiing well after coming off a knee injury in the fall and



Picabo Street of the United States celebrates after crossing the finish line to take win in the women's downhill race at the Alpine skiing world championships. Street took the gold in 1 minute 54.06 seconds (Reuters photo)

Canada's best bet for a medal in the worlds, was fourth in 1:54:71 and American Megan Gerety was fifth in 1:54:95.

Seizinger, like some of the men in Saturday's downhill, suggested the course was too easy and favoured the strong gliders rather than more technical skiers.

"I'm very happy with silver because normally I don't do well on an easy course like this one," Seizinger said. "I like the more difficult courses. I usually don't do well because on gliding courses I'm not heavy enough."

Seizinger, in fact, is listed as weighing 64 kilos just like Street.

Lindh, who won her first World Cup downhill race on this slope two years ago by .01 seconds, also nudged out

the Canadian pace Lindsay here by .01 seconds. She said the bronze was worth more than the World Cup win.

"A medal in a world championship stays with you a lot longer than a podium finish in World Cup," Lindh said. "It's really a different feeling. Megan and I weren't expected to win here so anything we did was great."

Street skied the course almost flawlessly, efficient over the upper technical part, tight in the turns in the mid-section, and then gliding well on the bottom portion.

The 23-year-old Seizinger, who crashed out of the Super-G earlier in the week, seemed to lose the race in the mid-section where she was dragged through a few turns.

Street got bronze here in Super-G on Monday behind Italian winner Kostner, and then out-raced Seizinger again on Friday in women's combined downhill where she was first and Seizinger was third.

Seizinger, under tremendous pressure at home in Germany, is still the clear favourite to win the overall World Cup title this season and has already clinched the Super-G title.

In Saturday's men's downhill, Austria's Patrick Ortlieb took gold with silver for Kristian Ghedina of Italy and bronze for France's Luc Alphand.

Through our events, the United States leads with three overall medals including a gold. Italy and Norway each have two medals with one gold for each country.

Sampras-Agassi showdown for world No. 1

SAN JOSE (R) — Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi will square off not only for the championship of the \$328,000 Sybase Open tennis tournament but also for the title of the best player in the world.

Austrian Thomas Muster is the currently the No. 1 player, but will be replaced by whoever wins tomorrow's Sampras-Agassi final.

The final between tennis' hottest rivals almost didn't occur, as the third-ranked Agassi needed two hours on Saturday to down No. 5 rank-

ed Michael Chang in their semifinal 6-2, 5-7, 6-4.

"Michael and I always bring out some great tennis in each other," Agassi said. "When we played at the Australian Open I wasn't really there mentally and physically for him. You have to show up strong."

The second-ranked Sampras also had a tough fight, but managed to subdue 21-year-old Slovakian Jan Krosak 7-6, (8-6), 6-3 in their semifinal.

Bludgeoning his inside-out

forehand and forcing Chang to run full sprints from corner to corner, Agassi seized control of the first set and cruised 6-2.

In the second set, a determined Chang got an early break to go up 2-0, but Agassi broke his opponent twice in a row to go ahead 4-2 and appeared to have the match within his grasp. But Chang became more aggressive and broke back to 3-4 when Agassi appeared to lose focus.

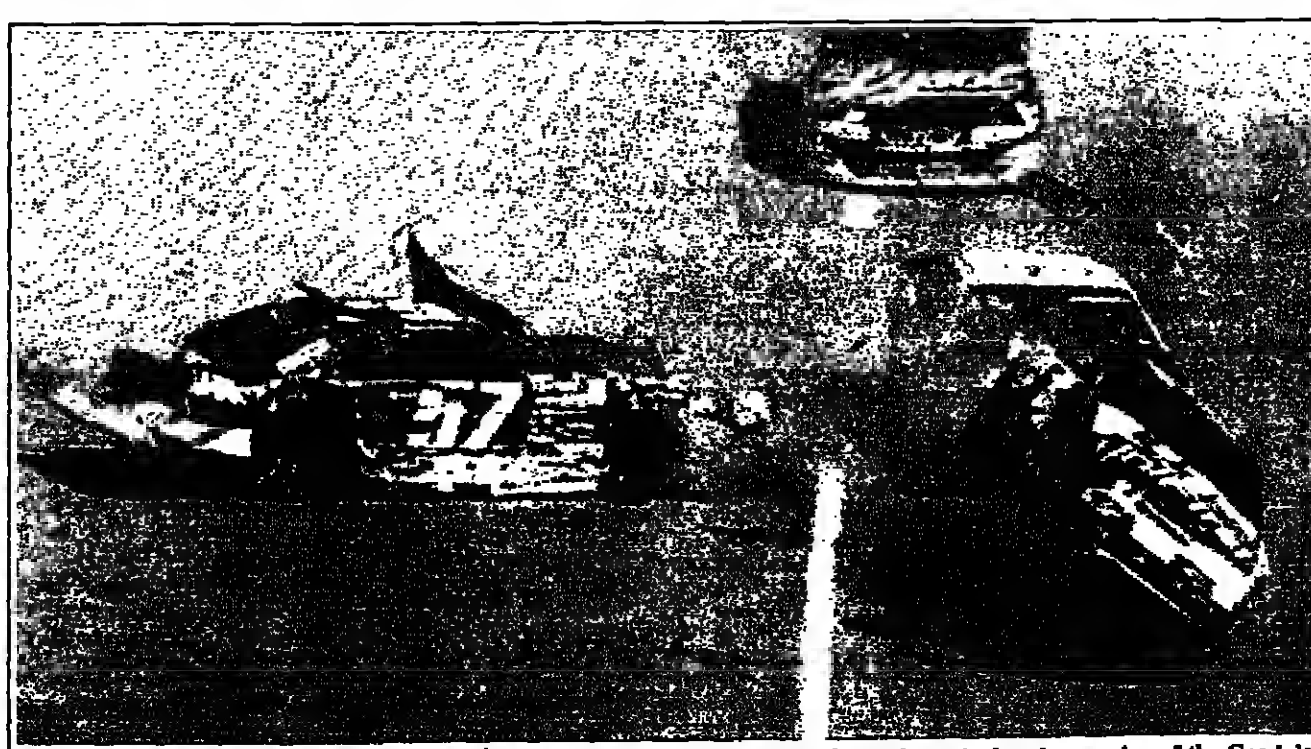
With Agassi serving at 5-6, a charged up Chang broke him

at love to take the second set 7-5.

"If Michael lost every match he was down a set and a break his total prize money would be \$690,000 instead of the \$10 million that it is," Agassi said. "The guy makes a living at fighting back."

In the third set, Agassi also showed some spunk, coming back from 4-2 down and reeling off 16 of 21 points and four straight games by charging to net and blistering crosscourt baseline winners.

That became the final contract. Declaring had an anxious moment when East chose the ace of diamonds as the opening lead but when the king appeared in dummy, all was well.



The #75 Ford (bottom right) driven by Doug Hevron gets up on two wheels after colliding with the #57 Chevrolet driven by Jason Keller in turn four at the Daytona International Speedway during the running of the Goody's 300 NASCAR stock car race on Saturday. Behind Hevron is the #1 Chevrolet driven by Hermie Sadler (Reuters photo)

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
AND TAMARA HIRSCH
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East-West vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH	EAST
♠ J 8 2	♠ A K Q 10 7 4 3
♥ K 10 9	♥ A 3
♦ Q 8	♦ K
♣ K Q J 4 2	♣ A 10 7

WEST	EAST
♠ 9	♠ 6 5
♥ Q J 7 6 4 2	♥ 8 5
♦ J 10 9 7 6 2	♦ A 8 4 3
♣ Void	♣ 5 5 5 2

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
3♠ Pass 3♥ Pass 3♠ Pass 3♠ Pass
4♠ Pass 4♠ Pass 4♠ Pass 4♠ Pass
5♠ Pass 5♠ Pass 5♠ Pass 5♠ Pass

Opening lead: Nine of ♣. Lead-directing doubles are a fact of life. Once in a while, though, they allow your opponents to wriggle out to a spot where they cannot be touched. This hand is from a match between the United States and Pakistan.

The auction shown is from the room where Pakistan sat North. South's cue-bid of four hearts showed a control in that suit and agreed spades as trumps, and North-South settled in the small slam when Blackwood revealed that an ace was missing.

West elected to lead the nine of diamonds in an effort to convey a distinct lack of interest in that suit. East won the ace and had no trou-

ble finding the club shift. West's ruff resulted in a one-trick set.

In the other room the United States, too, were in six spades for a brief moment. Here, however, as a result of a special control-showing response to South's two-club opening bid, North was to declare. As a result, West doubled for a club lead. North-South had a gadget for just such a situation. South redoubled to show doubt about the contract, and North judged well to correct to six, no trumps.

That became the final contract. Declaring had an anxious moment when East chose the ace of diamonds as the opening lead but when the king appeared in dummy, all was well.

Capriati future still uncertain

PARIS (AP) — Jeonifer Capriati had just faced a roomful of journalists to explain that she was withdrawing from the Paris Open with an injury, postponing her long awaited comeback.

Now, she was standing at a tunnel entrance to the centre court at the Stade Coubertin, observing intently as a 15-year-old girl danced across the blue carpet surface and blasted groundstrokes of fearsome power and precision.

Capriati's father, Stefano, motioned to her and suggested they head back to the hotel. Capriati told him to hang on, she wanted to watch for a few more minutes.

Capriati might have imagined she was looking at herself a few years ago. The object of her attention was Martina Hingis, the Swiss player who has been tagged as the sport's biggest new star since — who else? — Capriati.

At Hingis's age, Capriati had already been on the pro tour for nearly two years, made Grand Slam history as the youngest semifinalist at the French Open and Wimbledon, and earned enough

money to rank on Forbes' list of 40 highest paid athletes in the world.

But that was before Capriati's spectacular fall — the tennis burnout, the teen-age rebellion, the arrests, the stints in drug rehabilitation.

Now, six weeks short of her 20th birthday, Capriati was watching the latest "pbc-oom" and wondering whether she will be able to make a successful comeback after virtually 2½ years away from the game.

Anyone looking for answers to that question was left disappointed when Capriati pulled out of the Paris tournament last week just before she was due on court to play Sabine Appellmann of Belgium.

Capriati said she strained a muscle between her right hamstring and lower back while practising earlier in the day. A WTA physiotherapist verified the injury, but that did not dispel speculation that Capriati had decided to withdraw for other reasons, that maybe she wasn't ready for a comeback after all.

Stefano Capriati said she would receive treatment in Paris and, if the injury heals

in time, will play at a tournament next week in Essen, Germany.

Capriati has lost weight and appears to be in better playing condition than when she made a one-match return 15 months ago, losing in three sets to Anke Huber in Philadelphia.

Her practice partners in Paris said she was biting the ball with authority.

"She looks very sharp," Huber said. "It was nothing like the girl I played in Philadelphia."

"I think she is hitting the ball heavier than before," France's Nathalie Tauziat said. "She made perhaps more errors than before because she is lacking competition, but she still has her shots."

But until Capriati returns to tournament play, it will be impossible to assess the state of her game and her prospects for getting back into the top echelon.

Her return would give another boost to the WTA tour, which welcomed back Monica Seles in August after a 2½-year absence following her stabbing in 1993.

But few expect Capriati to be as immediately successful as Seles, who won her first comeback tournament at the Canadian Open, reached the final of the U.S. open and won the Australian Open last month.

Capriati, who will not get ranking and seedings privileges like Seles, must rely on wild card invitations to enter tournaments and is liable to face the top seeds in the first round.

"She has been working hard for four months now, but it really doesn't matter if she makes an impact this week," Stefano Capriati said before the withdrawal. "We are not expecting anything."

Capriati passed a first — and important — test Tuesday by answering questions from the world's media at a crowded news conference. She held up well as she spoke of the inner desire that brought her back to the game.

"I missed my time on the tour," she said. "I missed playing, missed the feeling. I'm still a tennis player. I'm still young. I want to get back to it. It's still inside me."



After winning the final match against IBM supercomputer Deep Blue, World Chess Champion, Garry Kasparov (left) shakes hands with Chung-Jen Tan from IBM's Deep Blue

Team before a press conference. Monty Newborn (centre) from ACM Chess Company (Reuters photo)

Man triumphs over machine in historic chess contest

PHILADELPHIA (R) — Garry Kasparov triumphed over the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue on Saturday, showing that the massive calculating power of a machine was not yet ready to beat the best of human brains in a classical chess match.

The Russian chess champion won the sixth and final game of the historic match to beat Deep Blue by four points to two after three wins, two draws and a stunning win for the computer programme in game one a week ago.

"I did not expect that it would be that tough," Kasparov told a news conference. "Probably I was very lucky to lose game one because that was the best warning, otherwise a disaster could have happened later."

Deep Blue made chess history by becoming the first computer programme to beat a reigning world champion in classical chess, in which players have hours to plan strategies. Grandmasters including Kasparov have lost to computers in games played at a much faster rate.

Kasparov, who said before

the contest that he was defending humans against the onslaught of computers, later stood in front of hundreds of cheering spectators, his arms held aloft and smiling in triumph.

He told reporters he had learned even more about the game of chess during the match against a computer that calculates 50 billion positions within three minutes. He also said he would take up the challenge again in future.

"I think the games will be analysed both by chess players and scientists because we know a lot now about the why it thinks in chess and other things," he said. "I thought I saw something similar to an artificial intellect. What I do by just feeling right or wrong, the machine finds by making these billions and billions of calculations."

With one point awarded for a win and a ½ point for a draw, Kasparov needed only a draw with the white pieces in the sixth and final game to collect the \$400,000 winner's prize from the sponsors, the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM). The IBM team was awarded \$100,000.

Playing with the advantage of the first move against Deep Blue's slav defence, Kasparov slowly built a better position in the last game.

"Garry just strangled the computer strategically," said grandmaster Yasser Seirawan, who also gave commentary for 600 paying spectators at the Philadelphia Convention Centre. "And it worked like a charm."

The programmers of the powerful calculating machine resigned on the 43rd move after three hours and 45 minutes at the chessboard.

Kasparov recovered from the game one loss by winning the second game. The next two games were drawn and the grandmaster won the fifth game on Friday.

The match in Philadelphia between the world's strongest player and the strongest chess machine ever built was part scientific project on how computers can solve complex problems and part showdown between man and machine.

IBM team leader Dr. C. J. Tan praised Kasparov for taking on the computer that scientists spent six years de-

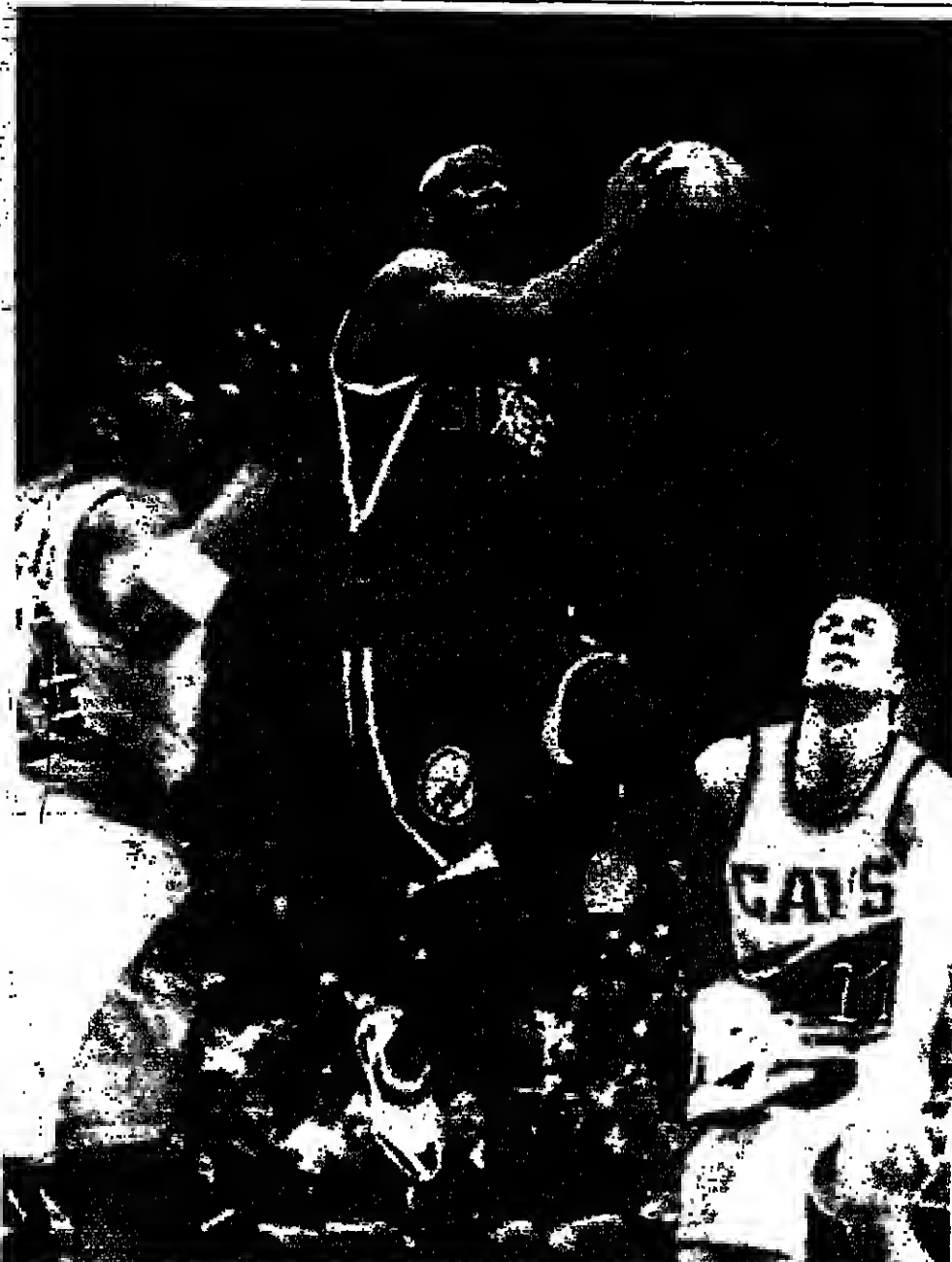
veloping. "Our goal was to test out a system and learn from this experience and take this back with us so we can continue to advance our research in computing technology in general," Tan said.

About 600 paying spectators watched the final game on giant video screens in a hall at the Pennsylvania Convention Centre. IBM said millions more around the world had kept track of the match on the Internet Website.

HTTP://WWW.CHESS-IBM.PARK.ORG.

The match was one of the events at this week's ACM convention celebrating the development of the first computer, known by its acronym ENIAC, at the University of Pennsylvania 50 years ago.

IBM scientists developed a processor chip specifically for chess calculations in its high-performance Deep Blue computer. Its main strength is its computing power that enables it to search more deeply on the "tree" of possible moves and more quickly than any previous programme.



Vernon Maxwell, of the Philadelphia 76ers, heads towards the hoop as Bobby Phillips (left) and John Crotty, of the Cleveland Cavaliers, look on. Action took place in the first quarter at Gund Arena on Saturday. Cleveland won 97-82 (Reuters photo)

Pistons ease past Raptors

DETROIT (R) — Allan Houston scored 10 of his 29 points in a third-quarter run and Grant Hill added 10 of his 27 in the third quarter as the Detroit Pistons cruised to a 108-95 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Saturday.

Joe Dumars had 14 assists and 12 points and Otis Thorpe had 11 points and 10 rebounds for Detroit.

Oliver Miller scored 25 points for Toronto. Former Pistons guard and current Toronto Raptors general manager Isiah Thomas had his number retired before the game.

In Cleveland, Torrell Brandon scored 25 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers continued their mastery of the lowly Philadelphia 76ers with a 97-82 triumph.

Chris Mills had 17 for Cleveland, which had six players finished in double figures. Vernon Maxwell scored 26 points and Jerry Stackhouse added 22 for Philadelphia.

In Miami, Shaquille O'Neal scored 31 points and Nick Anderson made three free throws in the final minute as the Orlando Magic won their third straight, a 95-93 victory over the Miami Heat.

Penny Hardaway had 15 points and Horace Grant had 12 points. Dennis Scott scored 14 points and Anderson had 13 for Orlando.

Alonzo Mourning had 27 points and 15 rebounds for Miami.

At New Jersey, Chris Childs hit a three-

pointer, made a steal and converted a pair of free throws in the final minute as the New Jersey Nets scored the last 10 points of the

game and defeated the New York Knicks 82-77.

The Knicks held a 77-72 lead when Anthony Mason hit a short jumper with 2:20 remaining. Armon Gilliam, who led the Nets with 28 points, then scored on a jumper in the lane with 2:03 left to start the game-ending 10-0 run.

"We didn't quit when we were down and came up with the right plays at the right time," said Nets coach Butch Beard. "I can't feel happier for these guys."

Childs finished with 20 points. In Los Angeles, Loy Vaughn and Rodney Rogers scored 22 points apiece as the Los Angeles Clippers snapped a nine-game losing streak with a 100-96 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers at the pond in Anaheim.

Brent Barry scored 18 points and Pooh Richardson had 14 points and six assists for Los Angeles.

Rod Strickland and Arvydas Sabonis scored 22 points each for Portland.

RESULTS

Cleveland	97	Philadelphia	82
Detroit	108	Toronto	95
Orlando	95	Miami	93
New Jersey	82	New York	77
LA Clippers	100	Portland	96

Giovanni scores twice in Santos win

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Midfielder Giovanni, one of Brazil's most exciting players, scored two goals to inspire Santos to a 3-0 win at Ferroviaria in the Sao Paulo Championship on Saturday.

The result, in a weekend when the games were brought forward to Saturday because of carnival celebrations in Brazil, kept Santos in with a chance of finishing in the top two of the first stage of the competition and earning a place in the final round.

Giovanni, who inspired his team to the runners-up spot in last year's Brazilian championship, scored with a superb left-foot shot in the first half and a close range effort in the second. An own goal by dede had given Santos, fifth in the table, the lead.

Russian speed skater banned

HEERENVEEN, Netherlands (AFP) — Russian speed skater Svetlana Fedotkina has been banned for two years after failing a drug test it was confirmed here on Sunday.

The Olympic 1,500m silver medalist tested positive after winning in the World Cup meeting in January at Medeo, Kirghizstan said Gerd Zimmermann, vice-president of the International Skating Union.

The 28-year-old had been leading the 1,500m World Cup points table ahead of Germany's Gunda Niemann.

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Turino Hotel wishes to organise a specialist group of those operating as secretaries, executive secretaries and generally in the secretarial sections of companies and major institutes and agencies.
The idea is to form the Club of Turino which is basically friends of the hotel operation who would receive a membership card that entitles them to specific benefits at Turino Hotel.
Turino will be looking for a list of more than 100 members but not more than 200 members.
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Please apply as soon as you can!!
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Majoli knocked out of Paris final

PARIS (AFP) — Home favourite Julie Halard-Decugis won her first WTA tournament title in France on Sunday after staging a spectacular first set recovery to beat top-seed Iva Majoli of Croatia 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) in the final of the \$450,000 Paris Indoor Open.

The in-form 25-year-old player from La Baule in the west of France, winner of her fifth career tournament at Hobart, Australia, last month, surged back after looking down and out while trailing 1-5 in the first set. She then held on grimly as

a 5-1 second set lead frittered away but clinched her triumph in the tie-break.

The win means that Halard-Decugis, currently 32nd, will move up to 19th in the world rankings on Monday.

She reached her highest-ever ranking 13 months ago when she was the world's number-15.

Majoli, 18, who had been suffering from 'flu all week and who had been taking anti-biotics, went to pieces after coming to within two points of winning the first set

Liverpool advance to 5th round

LONDON (R) — Liverpool brushed off their F.A. Cup fourth round challenge by second division Shrewsbury with a 4-0 victory on Sunday, yet it took a 70th minute own goal to turn the match firmly their way.

The win took them into a fifth round home tie against first division contenders Charlton Athletic on Feb. 28.

Shrewsbury went into the twice-postponed game at their Gay Meadow home seeking a result to match their giant-killing triumph over Manchester City in 1979, but their chances were virtually strangled at birth by Stan Collymore's eighth-minute goal.

Liverpool took the time to

build on their early boost and Shrewsbury briefly threatened early in the second half before the Premier League aristocrats finally produced a semblance on ruthlessness that destroyed Rochdale 7-0 in round three.

The pre-match minute's silence for former Liverpool boss Bob Paisley, observed with admirable respect by a 7,572 crowd, seemed to extend into the game itself as Liverpool achieved an immediate stranglehold and even the most partisan Shrewsbury supporter could not remember when Liverpool keeper David James was seriously troubled during the entire 90 minutes.

CINEMA	TEL: 634144	CINEMA	TEL: 699238	CINEMA	TEL: 677420	AMMOUN.THEATRE & CINEMA/TEL: 618274 - 618275	Nabil & Hisham's Theatre TEL: 625155
PHILADELPHIA		PLAZA		CONCORD			
Jean-Claude Van Damm in		Adel Emam/Dalal Abdel Azeez/ Shereen Saaf AlNaser		CONCORD "1"		Ahmad Zaki / Ragdah in	"Ahlan Tatbie" play
SUDDEN DEATH		Sleeping on Honey (Arabic)		Sleeping on Honey (Arabic)		ESTAKOZA (Arabic)	Welcome Normalisation
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 3, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 8:30 p.m.
				CONCORD "2"			For reservation call 625155
				Van Dam/Roger Moore			
				THE QUEST			
				Shows: 12, 1:45, 3:30, 5:15, 6:45			

Crisis in Bosnia Dayton pact averted - Holbrooke

ROME (R) — The United States said on Sunday a crisis threatening the landmark Dayton peace accord had been averted after the presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia reached crucial agreements at an emergency summit in Rome.

"In Rome we have avoided a crisis by smoothing out and indeed perhaps eliminating those bumps in the road (to peace)," U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke told a news conference.

The agreements, laid out in three separate texts, covered moves towards suspending U.N. sanctions on the Bosnian Serbs, the unification of Sarajevo and the divided Muslim-Croat town of Mostar, war crimes and prisoners of war.

The leaders agreed to restore all contacts between Bosnian factions and the NATO-led Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia, mediators said.

"The three sides have agreed that all the contacts, military and civilian, that have broken down in recent

days will be resumed on schedule," Mr. Holbrooke said. "Nothing was given in exchange for this. They're simply returning on their own."

The first of the scheduled meetings will take place on Monday on the USS George Washington aircraft carrier in the Adriatic, he added.

Bosnian Serbs had broken off links because of the extradition of two Serb officers accused of war crimes.

Mr. Holbrooke said the leaders agreed "precise modalities" to cooperate with the international war crimes tribunal in the Hague. He gave no details but it appeared suspected war criminals would be arrested only if already indicted by the tribunal.

Mr. Holbrooke also said moves would start this week to suspend U.N. sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs once NATO commanders affirmed that the Serbs were complying with the Dayton peace accord.

"We prevented a situation that could have jeopardised the Dayton agreement...I

believe that we passed the test but it wasn't easy," said Mr. Holbrooke, who brokered the deal negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, last November.

He said Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic had all re-affirmed their commitment to the Dayton accord.

A hot-line is to be set up between Mr. Milosevic and Mr. Izetbegovic to enable them to try to resolve problems as quickly as possible.

"We wanted to find a final solution that was agreeable to everybody," said Susanna Agnelli, foreign minister of Italy, which hosted the talks as president of the European Union (EU).

A document on the reunification of Sarajevo said the handover of Serb-held suburbs of the Bosnian capital would take place March 20 as originally outlined in the Dayton accord.

The Bosnian government had pushed for the date to be brought forward by a month but appeared to have

conceded to Western demands to stick to the original agreement.

The transfer of authority to the federation in the five (Serb-held) suburbs will be completed by March 19. The details of the future organisation of the unified Sarajevo are yet to be decided, the document said.

In separate talks in Rome, the EU brokered an agreement between Muslims and Croats to reunify the divided Bosnian town of Mostar to come into effect Feb. 20.

The EU presidency in consultation with the administration of Mostar has provided the parties with a comprehensive solution for the integration of Mostar as a unified city, the document said. "The parties have adopted this comprehensive solution."

The Croat and Muslim mayors of Mostar were summoned to Rome together with the EU's chief administrator in the town to try to settle the problem threatening relations within Bosnia's Muslim-Croat federation.



RUSSIAN PAIR SKATERS PERFORM: Oksana Griechuk and Yevgeny Platov of Russia perform in the finals of the ice dance programme during the "Centennial on Ice" figure skating competition in St. Petersburg on Saturday. The pair from Russia finished first in the competition (Reuters photo)

Doggone hard to find pet hotels in Singapore

SINGAPORE (R) — The exodus of Singaporeans during holidays next week has hiked occupancy rates in pet hotels all over the island, the Sunday Times newspaper reported. Two pet hotels said they were fully booked while another noted a 10 per cent increase in the number of four-footed guests. Singapore will be virtually shut three days this week as the government and most firms close for lunar new year and Muslim Eid Al-Fitr. Many people will flee the tiny island for holidays. "This is a very busy period... because people are taking advantage of the long public holidays to take their vacation," the newspaper quoted Eric Lim of Ericsson Pet Farm as saying. The farm now has 400 guests, mostly dogs.

Chinese woman produces Lunar New Year quads

HONG KONG (R) — While many Chinese detest the ban on having more than one child, at least one mother was full of smiles on Lunar New Year's eve Sunday — she produced an instant family of four quadruplets. The "wonder quads", two boys and two girls, were born prematurely earlier this month in the 34th week of pregnancy to a 27-year-old peasant called Lung in the southern city of Guangzhou, south China newspapers reported Sunday. Multiple births are exempt from China's draconian family planning law, which limits families to one offspring. The entire obstetrics department of a Guangzhou hospital was mobilised to make sure nothing went wrong with the birth. The boys weighed 2.0 kilograms and the girls weighed 1.5 kilograms and 1.7 kilograms, the Guangzhou Daily said. The birth was a happy turn for the mother, whose son by a previous birth had been killed in an accident at age two. The family was overjoyed at the birth, the papers said, although they were now worrying about how to feed the family.

Threats against Peres, daughter says

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres's daughter said on Sunday she had received death threats against her father and herself.

Zvia Walden, a university lecturer, made the disclosure only hours before Mr. Peres accused the right-wing Likud Party of fanning tensions within Israel over the issue of Jerusalem in the run-up to early elections expected in May or early June.

"There are threats against the prime minister... People who oppose him are losing their minds. I think they feel the moment of truth is coming and the solution be strived for over many years is finally becoming a reality," Ms. Walden said.

"I am also a target for those who find no other outlet but to issue despicable threats," she told Israeli radio in a rare interview by a member of Mr. Peres's family.

Mr. Peres last week called

early elections to capitalise on a wave of popularity following the Nov. 4 assassination of his predecessor Yitzhak Rabin by a religious Jew opposed to the Labour-led government's peace moves with the Palestinians.

Ms. Walden said the threats were made both before and after Yigal Amir gunned down Mr. Rabin at a Tel Aviv peace rally. Israel radio said she had received threats at her home and reported them to the Shin Bet security service.

Taking aim at the Likud, Mr. Peres said the main opposition party was fanning anti-government feelings through ads in newspapers on Sunday saying he would give away Arab East Jerusalem after the election.

"The prime minister emphasised that the entire cabinet is united on the principle that Jerusalem should not be divided and allegations to the contrary should be considered incite-

ment," said cabinet secretary Shmuel Hollander, briefing reporters after his weekly meeting on Sunday.

Mr. Peres's comments on incitement echoed accusations made by Mr. Rabin's widow Leah after the assassination. She said the Likud, by failing to curb anti-government rhetoric at rallies, had created an atmosphere of hate that led to the killing.

Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who rejected Leah Rabin's allegations at the time, said on Sunday Mr. Peres was also wrong to accuse his party of incitement when all it did was raise an issue central to the election campaign.

"This is what this election is about. It's a referendum about the future of Jerusalem," Mr. Netanyahu said at a news conference.

Israel claims Jerusalem as its indivisible capital but Palestinians want East Jerusalem, which Israel captured in the 1967 Middle

East war, for the capital of their future state.

Jerusalem's Likud mayor, Ehud Olmert, said that if Mr. Peres was serious about retaining Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, he should close the PLO headquarters in the city known as Orient House by March 1.

At the cabinet meeting, ministers were briefed by security officials on threats to their safety.

"Information (emerged at the meeting indicating)... that the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin did not end the violence and the extremism but left it alive and well and some say even opened the door for further assassinations," Religious Affairs Minister Shimon Shetret told reporters.

Israel's army radio said ministers mentioned by security officials as potential targets included Police Minister Moshe Shahal and Environment Minister Yossi Sarid.

'Yemen made several concessions to Eritrea in Red Sea conflict'

SANAA (AFP) — Yemen said Sunday it had made several concessions to Eritrea in a bid to resolve their armed standoff over a strategic chain of Red Sea islands but accused Asmara of preparing to renew hostilities in the area.

A Yemeni official who asked to remain anonymous said Sanaa had made three concessions in a bid to smooth mediation efforts being led by France.

It had dropped a pre-condition to talks that Asmara withdraw all its troops from the island of Hanish Al Kabir (Greater Hanish) and given its approval for the dispute to go to arbitration by a third party, an Eritrean demand which Yemen had so far refused.

It did not spell out which third party would be charged with the task but agreed that neither side should resort to force during a period of arbitration which should not be longer than six months.

The concessions came during a visit by French mediator Francis Guttman who was given a draft accord to hand to Eritrea before he left Sanaa.

"However, Eritrean leaders who accepted the French mediation at the beginning of the month have taken a step backwards in an irresponsible way, and are trying to impede it by raising multiple pretexts," he said.

Pessimistic statements out of Asmara "revealed

Eritrea's intentions to orchestrate a new aggression and to increase the area of tension in the Red Sea."

An Eritrean commission said Friday the two countries had been unable to agree on a definition of their conflict.

Yemeni officials on Thursday also accused Asmara of boosting its military presence on the 68 square kilometre island captured by Eritrea Dec. 18 after a three-day battle in which nine soldiers died.

Since then the two sides have maintained a tense armed standoff in the area, which is criss-crossed with busy shipping lanes.

The official daily Al

Thawra on Sunday repeated

Yemeni claims that "the

island of Greater Hanish

and the whole archipelago

belong to Yemen."

"Yemen has shown proof

of its wisdom and patience

since the start of the conflict

and has behaved with a 20th

century mentality in face of

the Eritrean aggression,

whereas the Eritrean leader-

ship is acting as if we were

still in the 17th century by

occupying by force the ter-

ritory of other countries."

It accused Eritrean leaders

of "foot-dragging" even

though Sanaa was doing

everything possible to

"reach a peaceful solution

and preserve security and

stability in the Red Sea."

Greater Hanish is part of a

chain of nine islands which

guard the mouth of the Bah

Al Mandah straits.

Egypt pardons 269 'repentant' militants

CAIRO (R) — Egypt will release 269 jailed Muslim militants as part of an amnesty to coincide with the end of the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, local newspapers said on Sunday.

The government daily Al Gomhuria said the men had "repented" and would be released on Monday with 200 pounds (\$59) each. Their release will mark celebrations of the Eid Al Fitr feast that marks the end of Ramadan, it said.

The men had belonged to militant groups which have been fighting for almost four years to overthrow the government and replace it with a strict Islamic state.

Some 1,300 other "repentant" militants have been released so far from Egyptian prisons, Al Gomhuria reported, but it did not say when they were set free.

More than 920 people have been killed in political violence in Egypt since militants launched their anti-government campaign in 1992.

Muslims await feast that ends month-long fast

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — Muslims worldwide thronged markets for last-minute shopping and scanned the night sky Sunday, searching for the crescent moon signaling the three-day holiday that follows the fasting month of Ramadan.

If the crescent is sighted Sunday night, the three-day Eid Al Fitr begins Monday. Otherwise, by default, the holiday will begin Tuesday.

Shoppers stocked up on cakes, dates and holiday delicacies in markets here. They also bought gifts for family and friends as children excitedly awaited holiday goodies.

"My husband always buys expensive jewelry for me on the feast," said Fatima, 23, who wouldn't give her last name but said her husband was a banker. "It's always a beautiful surprise for me every year."

Stores in central Manama, the

capital, were crowded.

Opposition groups have called for a boycott of the holiday to protest a police crackdown on weeks of anti-government unrest.

They asked their followers to cut purchases to "absolute necessities," but there was as yet no clear sign that the boycott had taken hold.

The world's 1 billion Muslims largely inhabit a broad arc that begins in northwest Africa, sweeps through the Arab countries, Turkey, Iran, the Indian subcontinent and reaches as far as Indonesia — the most populous Muslim country.

But they are also found far from the main Muslim centers, as far south as South Africa, as well as in major cities in North and South America where they have sizeable communities.

In Bahrain, on the night before the feast, special sweets are cooked and young women beautify their

'Pope wants Lebanese Christians to vote'

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri was quoted on Sunday as saying Pope John Paul wanted Lebanon's influential Christian minority to take part in parliamentary elections due this year.

Mr. Hariri told the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat he received the assurance during meetings on Saturday with the Pope and senior Vatican officials.

The Sunni Muslim premier also dismissed rumours circulating in Beirut that the authorities are considering extending parliament's term to avoid the need for elections

expected in September.

Most Lebanese Christians boycotted the last elections in 1992, principally in protest at the presence of 35,000 Syrian troops in the country and their failure to withdraw from Beirut under the terms of a 1989 pact that ended the civil war.

The Syrian troops are still stationed in Beirut and two-thirds of Lebanese territory and the Christians are divided over whether to end the boycott or vote in the poll.

The boycott has sharply reduced their political influence but they argue that the Syrians' presence means Lebanon is not free or sovereign.

"The Vatican supports the participation of the Christians in elections and therefore endorses their playing a positive role on that level," Mr. Hariri told Al Hayat.

He said the sole question raised on the issue by Vatican officials was about the rumours that the election might be postponed by extending parliament's term.

The term of President Elias Hrawi, a close friend of Syria which is the main power-broker in Lebanon, was extended for three years in November, avoiding the need for a presidential election.

Solar eclipse to give rare view of daytime comet

BEIJING (AP) — In a rare heavenly quirk, a solar eclipse on China's northernmost fringe in early 1997 will give a rare daytime glimpse of a major comet that is normally obscured by the sun's intense light. Astronomers at the Beijing Observatory, quoted Sunday by Xinhua News Agency, said the March 9, 1997, eclipse would come just as the Hale-Bopp Comet surges in visible intensity. "At that special moment, people will be able to see the comet in the daytime, during the solar eclipse," Xinhua said. The stage for the rare astronomical show is the northernmost district in China, Mohe, on the Heilong — or Black Dragon — River in Heilongjiang province on the border with Siberia.

The Hale-Bopp Comet was discovered by two amateur astronomers in the United States in July 1995. It is expected to intensify from February to April 1997, displaying a long tail and bright visible light at just the time of the solar eclipse — when the moon passes between the sun and Earth, blocking all or part of the sun's light. "It is rare in the world for two such astronomical phenomena to coincide," Beijing Observatory Director Li Qibing was quoted as saying.

